ウルトラウテさんの
婚活事情
鎌池和馬
イラスト／凪良
電撃文庫

ウィルトラウテさんの婚活事情

鎌池和馬

イラスト／凪良

第一話

ジャックと豆の木の背景は北欧神話である

「世界樹ユグドラシルを己の力のみで登攀するがよい。
汝が天界アスガルドまで辿り着けた暁には、
汝との婚姻を認めようぞ」
北欧の主神オーディンに仕える戦乙女（ワルキューリエ）―ヴァルトラウテ

第二話　神々の武具は神々が作っている訳ではない

「ヴァルトラウテちゃん結婚おめでとー!!
これでまたお空に輝いていた星の一つがくすんで淀み、
フレイヤちゃんの輝きがより一層増すのであった!!」
女神にしてエロい姉さん――フレイヤ

第三話
神族と巨人の違いはとてつもなく不公平だ

「おや奇遇だな。こんな所で会うなんて。
俺はこれからムスペルヘイムに用がある。
少年は海水浴かね？」

アース神族のジョーカーの異名を持つ『悪神』――ロキ

A.E.01
もはや水着回とか言っている場合ではない

「あそびましょー」
ミズガルズに住む唯一無二の『ピュア』――人間の少年

「人間界ミズガルズの文化水準へ
厳密に近づけるのであれば、
野外で全裸というのが正統派スタイルだが……」
長女ブリュンヒルデ

「むっ、九女ロスヴァイセ！
何ですかそのスクール水着型の
不自然な日焼け跡は!?」
次女ゲルヒルデ

「おっぱいはあるので
手ブラで頑張りたいと思います。
目指せカラーピンナップで
全員集合絵……」
三女オルトリンデ

「今日はトップだけならポロリも
覚悟する所存ですますよ」
六女ヘルムヴィルゲ

「いやいや
次女ゲルヒルデ姉さん。
重たい鎧を着込んでいるから
そのせいで」
九女ロスヴァイセ

「ワンピース派なんだ」
五女シュヴェルトライテ

「四女ヴァルトラウテは
別腹だとしてもさー。
九人全員挿絵になったら
まさしくミラクルだぜ」
八女グリムゲルデ

「セパレートだのビキニだので
海に入ろうと思うヤツらの気がしれないわ」
七女ジークルーネ

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もはや水着回しとか言っている場合ではない

デザイン／渡邊宏一
（有限会社ニイナナニイゴオ）

ウォルトラウァさんの婚活事情

鎌池和馬
イラスト／凪良

Chapter 1: Jack and the Beanstalk was Set to a Backdrop of Norse Mythology

Part 1

A Valkyrie descended to the human world of Midgard.

She had long blonde hair and white skin. She was tall for a woman, but had a much more slender frame than a man. It was a balance that could not be maintained by any soul born of a human mother. Her beauty was not the type that was meant to draw the opposite sex to her. Her beauty was wrapped in a chill like a flower offered up to a slaughtered foe.

Her appearance was that of a woman in her mid-twenties, but human aging did not apply to a Valkyrie. She had been fighting for much, much longer than that.

The armor she wore was green. However, that was just one aspect of the armor. It was magic armor that could freely change its properties to suit the situation. The aurora seen in the northern sky was actually the constantly changing light produced by a Valkyrie's armor.

She held what looked like a bluish-white spear in her right hand, but it was made up of the very lightning that fell from the sky. A swing of her weapon was enough to slaughter all who had made themselves enemies of the heavenly world of Asgard. They would be destroyed down to their souls and unable to even join the realm of the dead. That divine punishment was known as the Spear of Destroying Lightning and it held enough destructive power to warrant such a name.

“Is that all?”

She was surrounded by nothing but rubble.

The name of the maiden who glowed radiantly amid the blackened scenery was Waltraute.

She was tall but only when compared to a human woman. Even so, she stood triumphant above all those around her. She had crushed, wiped out, and burned away all those who had been taller or larger than her.

No one could imagine that a false temple gaudily decorated with gold and marble had stood there not long before. All that remained was black. Pitch black. The garish decorations had been torn down and all that was left had turned pure black as if to attest to their sins.

Sinners.

Heretics.

Those rebels who had joined with the giants to intentionally create monsters and then used the offspring as slaves had all been purged. They had committed three major sins. Loving those

beyond their species was not one of them. It was joining with the giants for their own personal greed that had been one of those sins. The second had been using the offspring as tools. Even if they were half human, using anyone with a human soul as a tool was a sin. And the last was that they had offered up their young to join with the giants rather than doing it themselves. It had been judged that the ultimate punishment was required.

…Actually, Odin had only ordered Waltraute to sort out the souls of the youths who were likely to die in the disturbance and lead only those necessary to Valhalla, the great hall of the heavenly world. However, she had used a bit too much strength as she had a tendency to do.

Thanks to that, it had all ended before a large-scale tragedy could occur, and all of the owners of the souls she was supposed to guide had not survived.

There was a reason Valkyries did not stand at the top of everything even though they were the strongest when it came to pure power.

Without giving even a glance to the survivors who had their heads hanging down, Waltraute looked up into the sky and spoke to someone who was not present.

"Report. Situation 3469 is complete. …I suppose the ruler on the throne is angry again. But I suppose the queen of the realm of the dead is also gnashing her teeth at missing out on those impure souls. With that in mind, let's just call this even."

The humans living in Midgard would likely be unable to understand some of what the gods said. They purposefully tried to keep the humans from understanding more than they had to.

"Understood. So I have authorization to return. Tell Heimdallr to guide me along the route. Over."

As she finished speaking, a single ray of light burst through the dark clouds above her head. It fell directly atop Waltraute. The next thing she knew, a giant white horse was standing next to her. Waltraute climbed atop the horse and her hair floated up unnaturally. Once that change in gravity reached the white horse's giant body as well, Waltraute's very existence would be temporarily split into pieces and she would leave the human world of Midgard while overcoming all forms of aerodynamic restrictions.

But then…

An error occurred in the return process.

A boy was weakly clinging onto Waltraute's right leg as she sat atop the white horse.

"A survivor, hm?" said the Valkyrie with an emotionless look in her eyes. "Do you wish to head to Valhalla to experience the battles of the heavenly world? You need not be so hasty. If you continue to possess such a valiant and just soul, that time will surely come."

"So beautiful."

The boy's context-less comment was spoken with a hoarse voice.

He was looking at Waltraute's golden hair that was reflecting the light shining down on her.

"Can I have some?"

Waltraute fell silent.

Valkyries had but one role to play for the humans of Midgard…or so it should have been. From experience, she knew there were irregular situations that would occasionally occur.

In other words…

Sometimes, a man would fall in love with a Valkyrie.

"I am sorry, but I cannot do that," she replied with an icy voice.

The boy did not seem to understand the situation.

"Why not?"

"We live in different worlds. The world tree Yggdrasil divides up the nine worlds. The divisions between worlds may only be crossed for the purposes of a battle. That is why I am here in Midgard now. Crossing those divisions for no reason would cause a battle in and of itself."

"Ohh…" The boy's mouth opened wide but it was unclear what exactly seemed to have impressed the boy. "So you can't stay here?"

"I am not saying I cannot, but I see no rational reason to do so."

"Mhh…"

"?"

"I can't accept that. This isn't the time to talk about things in that way."

"Hm?" Waltraute looked slightly puzzled.

Waltraute did not understand the subtleties of human romance, so she chose the method her experience had taught her was the quickest option of dealing with such problems.

She grabbed the Spear of Destroying Lightning in her right hand.

She intentionally made it start noisily sending sparks flying every which way.

“Whatever the reason may be and whatever that person may say, a Valkyrie has the authority to deem anyone who stands in her way as evil. Be warned that anyone who blocks my path is destined to fall defeated before me.”

“Hm? Hmm? So if I beat you, you’ll do whatever I ask you?”

“Mh!? Wait a second!! What kind of roundabout thinking led you to that conclusion!? I was merely saying that anyone who got in my way would meet a bitter fate!!”

“I see… So I could marry you…”

“You’re just assuming you would win!! A-ahem. Soul born in the human world of Midgard, do you truly believe that frail glow of yours is enough to stand up to Waltraute, the fourth sister of the nine Valkyries?”

“Let’s fight!! Let’s fight!! Waltraute, tell me the rules of the fight!!”

“Dammit! I let my name slip out!?”

But Waltraute was not so cruel as to actually begin a competition of strength with that boy of Midgard as she would utterly demolish him.

(Oh, I know. I can give this human an utterly impossible challenge.)

That was the standard pattern for goddesses and princesses from all over the world both in ancient and modern times.

Waltraute cleared her throat and said, “My challenge to you is to scale the world tree Yggdrasil with your own strength. Once you arrive at the heavenly world of Asgard, I will accept your marriage proposal.”

(There is no way he can do it. Not even a Valkyrie like me could manage that. A soul born in the human world will likely be too overcome with awe upon seeing the world tree Yggdrasil to even touch it.)

“…What does ‘scale’ mean?”

“It means ‘climb’ and is usually used in the context of a mountain or a cliff!! I am telling you to climb up that giant tree with just those two hands of yours!!”

“Ehh!?”

“Th-that’s right. How about that? Can’t do it, can you? Simply impossible, isn’t it? Give up here and join with a human woman like a proper human man. A neighborhood childhood friend can be a surprisingly excellent choice. And now, I will be going.”

“All you have to do is climb a tree and you get to marry a Valkyrie!? I-I have to go tell everyone!!”

“Wait!! This is not a custom of my race! This is a competition that is only valid between the two of us!! If a large number of humans begin trying to climb the world tree Yggdrasil, the head god Odin will mistake it for a rebellion!!”

“Then I’ll climb it! If I climb Yggdrasil, I get to marry you, right!? You’re the one that said it, Waltraute!!”

“Mh.”

It seemed the boy truly intended to attempt the challenge, but Waltraute could not treat the challenge lightly as it was a competition with a winner and a loser.

The Valkyries were the members of the gods that dealt with battles and they were something like the strict guardians of competitions in the human world of Midgard.

Whose jurisdiction the world tree Yggdrasil fell under was a bit vague, but the competition was rooted in the human world of Midgard, so she had to be strict about it.

Also…

If the challenge was nothing more than something the boy had come up with, Waltraute could simply refuse to participate. However, Waltraute had been the one to suggest the challenge and the boy had accepted. That meant the competition had become official the second the boy had okayed it. Waltraute could not back out now.

“F-fine then. I will accept the competition. But a soul of Midgard will never be able to scale the world tree Yggdrasil.”

“I can do it.”

“The heavenly world of Asgard is literally above the clouds. If you run out of strength partway up and fall off, only death awaits you. Are you still willing?”

“I can do it.”

Even under Waltraute’s icy gaze that could cause heretics and even giants and dragons to tremble in fear, the human boy gave a defiant response.

(Those are the eyes of a warrior.)

But in the next instant, the boy gave a big grin, swung one arm around in a circle, and said, “Okay, I’ll climb up before you know it! Once I’m ready, I’ll head to Yggdrasil, so you wait at the goal point in Asgard!! That’s another rule!!”

“Wait,” said Waltraute suddenly from atop the white horse. “Why do you wish to marry me so much?”

“Hm?” The boy replied almost immediately. “Because you’re beautiful.”

“…”

“Waltraute, I will definitely climb up Yggdrasil, and we’ll get married when I do!!”

Once Waltraute returned to the heavenly world of Asgard, Heimdallr the watchman asked her a question.

“…Why didn’t you just refuse?”

A Valkyrie usually remained completely expressionless, but Waltraute’s cheeks reddened slightly and her eyes darted away when he asked that question.

“O-once the competition had been established, I could hardly just refuse him outright!!”

Heimdallr had been wondering why she had not simply returned to Asgard from the beginning, but before he could say anything further, Waltraute’s eyes darted away once more and she continued speaking.

“That’s…That’s right. It’s a competition, so I had no choice!! I am a strict guardian of competitions after all! Whatever it may entail, I must let it carry out to its conclusion once it has been established!!”

“Wait, don’t tell me you’re letting this go because he said you were beautiful and said he would marry you after he managed to climb u-…Eeee! Eeee!!””

“Could you explain to me what part of what I said led you to believe that? And could you give an explanation for why you are grinning like that?”

“I-is this invisible wall that is hard and as thick as concrete nothing but your aura of intimidation!? No, wait! I get it! I get it! Don’t bring out the Spear of Destroying Lightning! Wait, wait!!”

Heimdallr trembled in fear when faced with that grand destructive power that was being used to hide Waltraute’s embarrassment.

Whatever she may have said, her true feelings were clearly visible on her face.

Almost everyone was too frightened of her to try, but Waltraute was surprisingly weak to those who maintained a strong will while interacting with her.

Part 2

On one end of the heavenly world of Asgard were the seven runways of Bifröst.

They may have been known as “runways”, but the process by which they were used was quite complex. The user’s “existence” was split into pieces, and they could then be freely sent to any of the 9 worlds while ignoring all aerodynamic restrictions. It was not a complete “teleportation”. Technically, the user was accelerated to 97% of the speed of light, but the size of the nine worlds meant it was more or less instantaneous.

The Valkyrie armor that was broken to pieces along with Waltraute would react and spread out. That process caused a giant aurora to fill the night sky when a Valkyrie was sent flying through the sky.

It was largely due to Bifröst and the Valkyries that the Æsir were able to display such tremendous power in the nine worlds. It took a slight amount of time to begin the process, but in exchange, a military force made up of the Valkyries and the spirits of the dead known as Einherjar that were under their control could be sent wherever they were needed. The earlier annihilation of the heretics should be enough to demonstrate how much of a threat that was.

And…

Waltraute was now peering down to the human world of Midgard from the edge of Bifröst. Heimdallr the watchman was in charge of controlling Bifröst, so he was utterly fed up with the Valkyrie that was obstructing the path.

“Um, if you stay there, the 3rd runway can’t be used…”

“You have seven of them. The loss of one or two is no big deal.”

“Um, do you have any idea how many dozens of flights come through every hour? This is an issue of efficiency and distribution. You’re causing a traffic jam. Surely you know how blocking a seemingly empty lane can cause a huge backup on the highway. If you block the 3rd runway, the percentage of late flights will jump up to-…”

“What is your point?”

“Oh…um…nothing…I guess…Sigh…”

When she glared at him, Heimdallr shrunk down like he was preparing to close himself up in a small box.

While crouched down, Heimdallr said, “But was there really any reason to take that verbal promise seriously?”

“H-hmph! I do not think that boy from Midgard can climb the world tree Yggdrasil. But now that the competition has been established, I must see it through to the end as a Valkyrie. In the best case, he will make it to the base of the world tree and be too overwhelmed to do anything more. In the worst case, his awe upon seeing Yggdrasil will be too great and he will not even make it to the base.”

“…So in the ‘worst case’, the boy doesn’t even come for you?”

A glance that was as sharp as a spear that Heimdallr received in response to his unwanted comment caused his entire body to freeze in place. He realized he could not make his body any smaller than it already was.

Waltraute composed herself and said, “At any rate, I am only watching over this competition to its end. And that end will be the boy’s loss. If he does not show up, that counts as a loss. Once that happens, I will be freed from this nonsensical verbal promise of marriage.”

“Um…”

“It is true that the boy had the eyes of warrior when he announced he would climb the world tree. Those were the eyes of someone with a will strong enough to challenge a Valkyrie to a competition. But words are cheap. He is sure to lose his nerve when he sees the true recklessness of this challenge…Why are you interrupting me?”

“The boy has arrived.”

“!?!?!?”

Waltraute frantically looked back over the edge of the 3rd runway and to the human world of Midgard.

“Impossible…Impossible!! Does that boy have no fear of death!?”

“‘That he would go this far for an unrefined, battle-crazy girl that wears armor year-round like me just sets my heart aflutt-…’ No, I was just kidding! Please! Please forgive me! I won’t make any more liberal translations of your thoughts, so please spare me from the lightning!!” As Heimdallr held his hands up to cover his head, he looked down toward the surface. “J-Jack Elvan was it? According to the data we have on him, he comes from the middle class on Midgard.”

But of course, the boy had not arrived in Asgard.

The base of Yggdrasil was in Midgard. The boy had made it to that giant tree.

He truly seemed intent on climbing up that tree.

Any normal human would have been too filled with awe at the site of Yggdrasil and with a general fear of heading to another world to even think about trying to climb the world tree. Nevertheless, that boy had burst through those limitations.

It was called a tree, but the trunk was as thick as a standard-sized city was wide, so it felt more like rock climbing. The complexly intertwined branches and hollows almost turned it into something like a labyrinth.

Waltraute used magic to enhance her already superhuman senses (not that she was human in the first place), so she just had to stare down with her eyes wide open to see every step the boy took.

At the base of the world tree, the boy said, "I have my handkerchief, some snacks for if I get hungry, and a water bottle. Okay, time to go."

"He's extremely lightly equipped!! Wait, he's not even wearing boots! Those are sandals! At least prepare a lifeline…Ah, he started climbing! He really started climbing!! He started climbing up Yggdrasil in sandals! What do I do!?"

"…Th-there would be nothing wrong with you heading down to save him, right? You can just head down and grab him. I can open up one of Bifröst's runways for you."

"You fool!!!!" Waltraute's iron fist sent Heimdallr's giant form rolling across the runway like a pebble. "I am a heavenly being that rules over battles and I watch over all events with a winner and a loser!! I cannot interfere in a competition with clear rules!!"

"B-bghh…bbh…"

Heimdallr let out a groan without even a shred of intelligence in it, but he was not listening to what Waltraute was saying. He had more important worries.

Meanwhile, something happened down at the surface.

Even though Asgard was literally above the clouds, the boy was sitting on a branch and reaching for his water bottle after only climbing about 10 meters.

"Hahh…I'm exhausted."

"You weakling!!" shouted Waltraute.

"U-um, ten meters is pretty high up for a human," commented Heimdallr.

"That is not the issue here! He said that he would climb Yggdrasil and marry me. Even if the reward is completely ridiculous, it is still a sacred competition with a Valkyrie. And yet…And yet…that bastard!! Only 10 meters!? That is an insult to the one whose fate hangs in the balance here, is it not!?"

“Um…So basically you’re upset about that being as far as his feelings for you went and you want him to try a little harder? …Gyaaahhh! I’m sorry!!”

Waltraute seemed to want to avoid using her overwhelming strength on Heimdallr himself (despite the punch from earlier), so she started destroying the runway of Bifröst. Heimdallr began apologizing with all his strength because Bifröst’s destruction would do serious social damage to him.

But then he noticed something.

He pointed down toward the surface and said, “Look at that. There’s something down there!”

“Mh?”

Waltraute looked down and spotted a white cat approaching the boy who was resting on a branch of Yggdrasil.

For some reason the cat was able to speak the human language.

“Hey, there. What are you doing here? It’s dangerous being this high up. You’ll get hurt if you fall.”

“…That’s surprisingly good advice for a talking cat,” commented Heimdallr.

“…”

The boy responded by saying, “I’m climbing the world tree. Waltraute is waiting for me.”

“I-I am not waiting!!”

“But you aren’t trying to stop him either,” added Heimdallr.

“Of course not. This is a serious competition!!”

The cat then said, “But look up. Do you really think you can climb all the way up there?”

“I can,” replied the boy.

“How about you head down instead. If you go to Jötunheimr, you can find some magic water[1] that will give you any knowledge you wish for.”

“But Waltraute isn’t there.”

“If you drink the water of knowledge, homework will never be a problem again.”

“…Really?”

“Really, really. So give up on going somewhere as boring as Asgard and come with me to-…”

That was when Waltraute threw the Spear of Destroying Lightning.

With a tremendous noise, a bluish-white spear stabbed down in a straight line from heaven to earth. It passed directly in front of the boy and mercilessly struck the talking white cat down to the very depths of the surface.

Lightning.

The symbol of divine punishment.

While breathing erratically, Waltraute shouted down at the surface knowing full well her voice would not reach.

“Don’t interfere with a serious competition, you fool!! Do you want him to gain a body that cannot even reach the realm of the dead!?”

“Th-the kitty… The pretty kitty…!?” said Heimdallr.

“That was actually the Midgard Serpent!![2] When Útgarða-Loki tricked Thor, that giant snake aided in Útgarða-Loki’s illusions by transforming into a cat to leave Thor unprepared!! Look, the transformation is starting to come off. Creepy scales are starting to cover its body!! No competition can be fair with a monster like that involved!!”

“Oh, you’re right. It really is Jörmungandr,” said Heimdallr.

Waltraute folded her arms in front of her armor’s breastplate.

“Honestly. Even a beast powerful enough to stand on the same level as Thor is getting in the way… This is why you cannot take fate lightly. That boy need only think of the competition. Giving him that is proper manners as his opponent.”

“But the boy seems worried about the snake that fell to the surface. He’s climbing back down to check on it.”

“~ ~ ~!! Take. This. Competition. Seriously!!”

Waltraute started childishly stomping her feet in frustration, but she had only just declared that she would not directly interfere.

Part 3

After looking after the cat that had fallen to the surface, the boy began climbing Yggdrasil once more. (Incidentally, the cat tried to warn the boy again, but this time out of actual devotion rather than as a trick. However, it was driven off by a number of Spears of Destroying Lightning. She insisted this was because she would be responsible if the boy ended up getting to know the snake in the middle of the challenge.)

“So you don’t want him looking at anyone but you?”

“Ah?”

Heimdallr the watchman curled up under the crushing pressure of the piercing glare and immense aura of intimidation that were sent his way.

After the interlude with the cat, the boy continued to climb up the giant tree without obstruction. (Or rather, nothing was able to approach him while Waltraute had her frightening gaze on him.) As nothing was happening, Heimdallr started letting out yawn after yawn, but Waltraute’s gaze was as intent as ever.

“At this rate, he might actually make it all the way up.”

“Tch!! But if that happens, I have no choice! This was a serious competition!! I, Waltraute the fourth of the nine Valkyrie sisters, will of course perfectly carry out her duty as the loser! E-even if that means I must marry him!!”

“I see. I see.” Heimdallr had grown bored, so he carelessly let a comment slip out. “You keep going on about marriage, but what exactly do you plan to let that boy do once you marry him? Are you prepared to ask him the age old question of, ‘Would you like dinner, a bath, or the third option which you had damn well better choose’?”

“I-I am not going to lose, you fool!!”

“Of course, the acrobatics of the naked apron are basically a given with newlyweds.”

“Wh-what? What is this naked apron you speak of?”

“Well, you take it and you do this,” said Heimdallr as he explained it mostly with some vague gestures.

“…!?!?!?”

Without thinking, Waltruate brought down her fist and Heimdallr very nearly became one with the 3rd runway.

“B-bbhh!! Bgegbgbb!!”

“H-how much of an idiot are you!? I simply cannot believe that you could have such perverted thoughts!!”

“G-gbh… But the passion of newlyweds often leads them to cross those perverted lines. They tend to calm down a bit after a year, though.”

“S-so my loss comes with that kind of penalty?”

“You’ll have to head into the bath to wash his back and feed him small fruits directly from your mouth. Oh, and youthful indiscretions put serving him food on your nude body just barely in the range of the acceptable. By the way, I prefer the dolce type with whipped cream and strawberries over the proper type that uses seafood.”

“Wait, wait, wait!! How can the word marriage have so many different chips piled up on top of it!?”

“But I thought you weren’t going to lose.”

“Uuh…!?”

“No matter how many chips are piled up, it doesn’t matter so long as you win, right?”

“Th-that is exactly right.”

While trembling, Waltraute folded her arms in front of her breastplate and struck an impressive pose. She then shouted from the bottom of her gut.

“N-none of it matters as long as I do not lose! I just have to win!! As a Valkyrie, a heavenly being that rules over battles, I am a master of competitions!! I do not even need to think about the possibility of losing!! Mutter, mutter…”

“But the job of a Valkyrie is to gather the souls of those who valiantly died in battle, so aren’t you actually more associated with the losing side of-…bgyaaahhh!! Don’t strike me on the end of my elbow like that! Ah, my arm’s gone numb!!”

As those residents of the heavenly world argued, something changed.

“Hmm. He seems to be having trouble.”

“Look how high he is. He is bound to get tired after climbing a tree this long. In fact, I think climbing up using pure physical strength and without any guidance from you would be impossible even for the human Siegfried in his heyday. I am a Valkyrie and I am not even sure if I could do it.”

“No, that isn’t what I meant.”

“Then what did you mean?”

“Well…” Heimdallr pulled out a clear stone slate and called up a few pieces of data. “The world tree Yggdrasil does not actually divide up the nine worlds. And it holds up the heavens and the earth.”

“So?”

“Um, do you know the relationship between altitude and atmospheric pressure? The higher you go, the less oxygen there is. Divine beings like us are fine, but I think a human child is in trouble if he does not have oxygen.”

“…”

Waltraute’s face gradually paled.

“So…what exactly…does that mean?”

“We know for a fact that boy is climbing Yggdrasil and approaching Asgard,” said Heimdallr as he looked at the data. “But the closer a human gets to the heavenly world, the closer he gets to death. I believe that boy will die if he does arrive…”

“Wait, wait, wait.”

Waltraute stopped Heimdallr with one hand.

If the boy lost, his hopes would be dashed, and if he won, he would die.

Waltraute insisted that she had no desire at all to marry the boy, but she could not stand for the competition to be unfair.

Basically, Valkyries were obsessed with competitions.

Brynhildr, the oldest sister, had once failed in a similar issue involving marriage. The human Siegfried had cheated on her (he had been given a potion to erase his memories, so he had not realized what he was doing), so she had plotted his death. When that plot had succeeded, she attempted to take her own life.

“I made sure to report this incident to Odin and received proper authorization for the competition. We cannot have him treating a child climbing the tree as a rebel after all. And that eyepatched god of war vouched for the fairness of the competition. The head god saw this as a fair competition, so why is something like this happening!?”

“Maybe this was the reason Odin gave you authorization.”

“What…?”

“That bearded old man does not hesitate to cause wars in the human world just to obtain some skilled souls of those killed in battle. Actually trying to climb Yggdrasil would require bravery on a ridiculous level and everything is going well so far. That god of war would want a soul like that very, very badly. In other words, he might have purposefully overlooked the flaw in the rules in order to have that boy die and join the Einherjar.”

Part 4

His actual feelings were a bit more complicated.

In the great hall at the innermost portion of Valhalla, the one-eyed war god Odin sat on an extremely ostentatious throne. He exchanged a glance with his wife Frigg.

Odin looked about 40 and Frigg about 30, so they did not particularly look the part of the gods who had watched the entire history of the world. However, their appearance had no connection to their age because they had eaten the apples of immortality grown by the goddess Iðunn.

“I am opposed to this,” said Frigg. “Whatever your reasons may be, you are interfering with their efforts to acquire a family. Not to mention killing one of them.”

“You only think that because you are the goddess of marriage. And I think the way I do because I am the god of war and battle.”

“…”

“We cannot allow Waltraute to join with a human boy. Surely you know that intellectually even if you feel otherwise.”

“Are you referring to the fact that the Valkyries are a set of nine and that set is what controls the military force of Einherjar?”

“Even if they are nine individuals, their essences are connected. Waltraute alone is the same as the other eight. If she yields to a single human, that binds the other eight as well. The right to command the entire force of Einherjar will indirectly fall to that boy.”

“Yes, the Wagner Method. But is there any reason to go along with it? If you kick out Waltraute, you should still be able to maintain the Valkyrie system.”

“One role of the Valkyries is to provide a link between gods and men. They cannot be reorganized based simply on the circumstances of the gods. That is the entire point of the Wagner Method and why their form is that which is easiest to imagine for humans. …Surely you know why the Valkyries appear as beautiful women,” said Odin lightly as he sat atop his throne.

His throne was named Hliðskjálf and it gave any who sat in it the power to see across the entire world. Wagner was a very out of place name for that setting and time period, but he was able to use that throne to draw in information from “other places”.

“This is quite a problem,” said Odin despite not sounding troubled in the slightest. “We cannot have things turn out like that. Why do you think we have been gathering the souls of those who died in battle? It is all for the sake of the final war of Ragnarök. The evil spirits and giants are bad enough, so we do not need a third force joining in the fray.”

“And so you are going to take that boy’s life?”

“It is only a problem because it is a marriage between equals.” Odin gave a bitter smile to Frigg’s criticism. “But a Valkyrie has complete control over the souls of those who have died in battle. The opposite cannot be. Once that boy has died and become an Einherjar, Waltraute will have control over him. Once that happens, he cannot control Waltraute. Nor can he gain control over the Einherjar forces. Once that happens, we can happily celebrate their marriage.”

He took the idea of human life so lightly because he was the god of war.

He was not a god that protected those participating in a war; he was a god who preserved the state of war itself.

To those who got wrapped up in the war, he may have seemed like a wandering disaster (with a will of its own).

Frigg on the other hand was a goddess who helped humans join together and create new life, so she could only sigh. People often had difficulty understanding how the goddess of all types of marriage could end up married to someone as horrible as him.

『全てを見透す天界の管制官』

ヘイムダル

天界アスガルドの端に設置されている、七本の滑走路ビフレストを司る『番人』。ワルキュリエやその他の神たちを天界から人間界へ、人間界から天界へ移動する際の『転送』を管制する。口が軽く、つい思ったことを言ってしまう迂闊な性格。基本、どつかれ役。

『愛と結婚を司る、豊穣の女神』

フリッグ

軍神オーディンの妻。実質的に彼と同等の権限を持つ。見た目は三〇前後であるが、これは他の神々と同じく女神イドゥンの育てる不死の林檎を食べているため。ヴァルトラウテの良き理解者で、彼女を優しく導くアドバイス役を担っている……はずが、その行動の根幹には「だって面白そうだから」という不純な動機がただよう。

『本編の主人公』

少年

人間界ミズガルズに住んでいる少年。偶然、ミズガルズにやってきていたヴァルトラウテに一目惚れをした。その言動は、純粋無垢ゆえに様々な誤解を発生させる『完全無欠の天然キャラ』。優しい性格だが意固地なところもあり、自分で決めたことは成就困難であってもやり遂げようとする。「～なのね」といった、柔らかい口調で話す。

『美しき戦乙女』

ヴァルトラウテ

主神オーディンに仕える『ワルキュリエ』。その役割は、人間界ミズガルズで命を落とした死者達の魂を仕分けし、必要な者だけを天界の館ヴァルハラへ導くこと。ワルキュリエは九人姉妹で、彼女は四女である。規律の正しさを好み、他者にも自分にも厳しい……はずが、一人の少年によってその印象は覆されることに。「～であるぞ」といった、堅苦しい口調で話す。

But with the way the head god was, it would have been difficult for the world to continue on without a productive goddess like her by his side.

“At any rate, that boy must die no matter what you think.”

“I do not wish for that boy to fall in battle. If he does, their relationship will no longer fall into the category of marriage,” said Frigg. “Also, even if that a boy loses his life here, there is no guarantee that he will be picked up as an Einherjar, is there?”

“That is not my responsibility.” Odin shrugged. “I control those humans who have valiant souls. If he does not meet that requirement, then I have no duty to protect him. I am not about to steal a soul that has fallen into the realm of the dead.”

“I see.” Frigg sighed. “While that child may look gentle, a lot of violent emotions are hidden within. Do not blame me for what happens if this plot of yours is discovered.”

“Ha ha. What can a single angry human do?”

“That is not who I meant.” Frigg looked over toward the entrance of the great hall. “I was referring to Waltraute.”

In the next instant, a great trembling shook Valhalla.

At first, Odin thought a large explosion had occurred within. It sounded like the gods had started fighting to the death.

But he was wrong.

The tremendous vibrations continued and grew closer as they did. This was not the sound of a fight. Finally, Odin realized what it was.

“Footsteps…?” Sweat dripped down the ridges of the head god’s nose. “Mere footsteps are giving off this much resolve? Wait, I never gave Waltraute this much output!!”

“Anger over your interference with the competition is just a front. A maiden’s rage can grow without limit when something gets in the way of her love. But I suppose a god of war would not know anything about that.”

“Kh. In other words, that boy carelessly crossing between the nine worlds has caused a distortion in the very concept of battles!? How much did the three Norn goddesses of destiny know about this? Is this going to hasten the final war of Ragnarök!?”

“Sigh. You war-obsessed idiot…”

The doors of the entrance burst open. The thunder god Thor, who held the #2 spot when it came to power, came tumbling into the great hall.

“E-eee!! Father!! Father!!”

“What is it, Thor? Your face looks beat up and your hair is all frizzy!”

“I-I lost in a battle of thunder… My entire identity as the thunder god has been denied, so what am I to do now!?”

The area on the other side of the open doors was pitch black.

The killer intent emitted by sapient beings was supposed to be invisible, yet Odin clearly saw an illusion before his eyes.

It was obvious who was emitting it.

The darkness and thickness of the shadow showed the approach of the danger.

As he leaned against the wall on one side of the great hall, Loki gave a thin smile and said, “…Hm. The world destroyed by a single love. Not bad.”

“When the hell did you get here!? And don’t think you can become the star if you keep making those Chuunibyou-esque comments, you lover of temporary pleasures!!”

Odin had fallen into a complete panic, so he started yelling at someone completely unrelated to the danger at hand. Seeing that, Frigg brought one hand to her cheek and sighed yet again.

She had to wonder why all the men in the heavenly world knew so little about the subtleties of romance and never did anything for women.

She silently thought they could learn a thing or two from that boy, but actually said, “At least try to calm her down. This is a little too soon for you to be heading into the twilight, don’t you think?”

Part 5

Ignorant of the issues involved for those adults (or rather, gods), the boy continued grabbing at the rough bark of the world tree Yggdrasil on his way to Asgard.

However, his breathing grew erratic.

His face grew pale.

He entered an altitude sickness-like state, but it would not end there. As he continued on, there would be even less oxygen and the atmospheric pressure would fall. As the air grew thinner, the temperature dropped due to the loss of the atmosphere's insulation. A cold wind reminiscent of midwinter blew through the area around the boy.

It would not have been surprising had he stopped there.

But if he lost consciousness, he would end up falling down to the surface from that high altitude.

As the boy continued grabbing the bark despite the blood oozing from his fingertips, two ravens flew up to him.

They spoke simultaneously.

"Hi there! I'm Muninn!!"

"You're Huginn!!"

"We were forced to run over and give you a message!!"

"We were forced to run over and give you a message!!"

The boy who had not been at all fazed by the talking cat replied, "But you flew."

"He played the straight man! Now we know you're not too far gone to do that!!"

"Anyway…ahem. We have a message from Waltraute. Are you ready?"

"…Hm. I really shouldn't get any help from her while climbing Yggdrasil."

"This is important information about that very competition. And we don't really need your permission, so we'll just tell you. Here goes!"

"Mhh…"

The boy looked displeased, but the ravens' voices changed.

They now spoke with the voice of that Valkyrie he had met. Muninn and Huginn stood on the boy's left and right shoulders so the boy could listen to the voice as if he was hearing it via headphones.

"Can you hear me, boy? I now know more or less what that bearded old man is planning. For a human, it seems there is little difference between approaching the heavenly world of Asgard and approaching death. Odin purposefully overlooked that fact to bring you into the army of Einherjar."

"…"

"If you do not wish to die, climb down from Yggdrasil now. That is what I wish for as well. Surely the marriage you have imagined is not one that occurs after your own death. And I did not set up this challenge for it to have such a ridiculous result."

The boy fell silent for a bit.

He remained perfectly still while clinging to the bark.

The two ravens tilted their heads as they looked at his face from the side.

Finally, the boy raised his head and said, "You must be enemy characters sent here to mislead me!!"

Part 6

Meanwhile, Waltraute tore at her golden hair with both hands as she shot Spears of Destroying Lightning every which way into the sky. This surprised the female driver of the chariot of the sun so much that a solar eclipse very nearly occurred.

She had brushed aside her stubborn posturing and bent her competition-crazy beliefs in order to help that boy, and yet he had rejected it.

"Ooooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!! How could this happeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeennnnnnnnnnnnn!?"

"…And after he showed no doubts about that cat that suddenly started talking."

For his unnecessary comment, Waltraute grabbed Heimdallr with one hand and swung him around.

Seeing that, Frigg cut in, "Can't you say you have recognized his great efforts and go save him?"

"I-I…I simply can't do that, Lady Frigg! Doing so would make the competition invalid preventing it from ever being concluded! No conclusion would mean putting it off forever and…no, wait, wait! I would essentially be forfeiting the match myself which would mean…vahhh vahhh!!"

"…Hmm. I see you think more like Odin when it comes to this kind of thing. (Of course, you could resolve everything by proposing to him yourself.)"

Waltraute was too stubborn to do that, but the human boy would obviously be unable to reach Asgard under his own strength.

It was obvious she would have to do something to save that boy (and for them to get married, but Waltraute would never admit it herself).

“(Heimdallr, Heimdallr.)”

“(Uuh…Cough. What is it, Lady Frigg?)”

“(Do you have any good ideas as to how to get Waltraute to go to that boy?)”

“(If so, I would not have let her push me around this long.)”

“(How about we send in another Valkyrie?)”

“(She already struck down the Midgard Serpent for interfering. If another Valkyrie approached him, a war amongst the Valkyries would probably break out with them yelling about NTR this and NTR that.)”

“(I have heard that the essences of the nine Valkyries are connected, but I suppose they still fight due to their individual differences.)”

“Hmm…”

The two gods could not think of any truly good ideas.

But as the boy did not have much time, they decided to suggest every idea that came to their mind.

“Waltraute, what if you make it so you lose rather than having the boy win? The competition is set to end when that boy reaches the heavenly world where you are waiting for him. So if you head down to the human world first, you would ‘lose’ and be able to marry him.”

“I cannot do that!! I cannot intentionally lose a competition someone is risking their life over! That would be blaspheming that boy’s serious efforts!!”

“Um… He just has to climb up with his own strength, right? I can send down an airtight flying swan boat for him. He can pedal it himself, so…”

“No, you fool!! He has to do it with his own strength! Tools he prepared himself are one thing, but a tool handed to him by a third party is out of the question!!”

“This Valkyrie is a giant pain in the ass.”

“This Valkyrie is a giant pain in the ass.”

The two gods may have simultaneously grumbled in complaint, but they were not ready to give up yet. That human boy was in real danger (and if he died, Waltraute would likely physically destroy the heavenly world).

However, it seemed Waltraute refused to lend the boy a helping hand no matter what happened and she would use her top-class spear to strike down anyone else who might try to interfere. It was more or less impossible for the boy to reach Asgard under his own strength, so the two gods could only wait as the countdown until the end of the world continued.

But then Frigg clapped her hands together.

“I know! Waltraute, what about this?”

“?”

Part 7

As he grabbed at Yggdrasil's bark, the boy could tell his fingertips were gradually losing feeling. The air was thin, his ears were ringing horribly, and the cold wind ripping into him was robbing his body of heat. His consciousness began to grow cloudy and he could no longer feel pain in his hands that were ripped open and bleeding.

He could climb no further.

Nor could he head back down.

He really did understand. He understood that his request had been reckless. The boy's young heart accurately came to the conclusion that the pain and cold he was feeling were punishment for trying to obtain what he did not deserve.

But…

He continued on nonetheless.

"…Wal…traute…"

He did not give up. He knew he had been wrong, but he still did not give up. And so the boy ignored the blood flowing from his palm and forced his cloudy mind to make his body move. The boy did indeed continue on up even if it was at a rate no faster than a caterpillar crawling up the tree.

"Wait for me… I will…definitely win…"

And then the boy's hand slipped.

He did not know if it was due to strength leaving his hand or if it had merely slipped on the blood flowing from it. Even though he could not feel pain, he could still feel that the hand was no longer supporting his weight and that he was beginning to fall. A chill ran down his spine, but he could not stop his body now that it had begun to fall.

The boy's expression remained unchanged in that final moment

He did even have the presence of mind left to change his expression.

He did only one thing.

He reached out his hand.

He stretched it upwards.

He reached for the giant rough trunk he was supposed to be holding onto.

He was not swinging his arms around in an unsightly desperate attempt to regain his balance. He was trying to continue on despite knowing it was hopeless and impossible.

He knew he could only reach air, but he still stretched out his hand.

In that moment when the boy should have fallen upside down towards the surface, he suddenly felt support return to his body in midair. The next thing he knew, the suffocating lack of oxygen and slicing cold wind were gone. A beam of light had shone down from beyond the dark clouds. And two arms were now supporting the boy.

It was Waltraute.

The golden-haired Valkyrie was riding a white horse.

The boy had no idea how she had appeared, but even as Waltraute held the boy in midair, they continued to fall down according to gravity. However, she expressionlessly had the giant white horse effortlessly land on a narrow branch of the world tree.

The boy's first question showed what he cared about more than the fact he had survived.

"…Did I lose?"

"No." Waltraute shook her head. "You were the victor of this competition."

"How?" asked the boy while being held in the Valkyrie's arms. "I fell from Yggdrasil. I didn't make it to Asgard. I got help from you partway there, so I lost…."

"That is not the proper way to look at this." Waltraute looked the boy directly in the eye with her icy (in appearance only) eyes. "It is true I reached out to help you. But that is only because you made me do so. I had no intention of helping you. I intended to merely observe no matter what happened. However, you made me break my own rule. It was you that made me want to reach out to help you so badly that I would break my own rule. For that reason, my arrival here was accomplished with your own strength."

"…I don't really get it."

"The rules stated that you would climb Yggdrasil with your own strength. If you hold the power to summon a Valkyrie, then having me take you to Asgard is still using your own strength, is it not?" Waltraute then added, "The rules also stated that you would win when you arrived in Asgard where I waited. I must accept defeat as penalty for leaving Asgard in the middle of the competition."

Part 8

Some time later, the boy was still in the human world of Midgard and Waltraute was peering down from a runway of Bifröst on the edge of the heavenly world of Asgard.

This interfered with Heimdallr's work, so he looked troubled as he asked, "How long are you going to do this?"

"Sh-shut up. He went through a lot. It only happened because of the faulty rules I came up with, so I need to observe him to make sure there are no lasting effects."

"If you're that worried, you could have chosen not to live apart…"

"Make no mistake, you fool!!"

Waltraute's iron fist flew and sent Heimdallr writhing in pain from enough damage to immediately kill someone who was not a god.

Paying that no heed, she continued, "I-I did not want to get married in the slightest!! That was the only method I had to retrieve that stubborn boy from Yggdrasil! If I had not gone through that process, I would have been unable to help him. I am not attached to him. Not in the slightest!!"

"U-uuh…"

"With that in mind, it should be obvious that we are living separately. I have no intention to let the formalities of his rescue alter the way I live my life. If I did, it would just be a bother for him anyway. Hey, are you listening? I'm asking if you're listening to me!!"

As Waltraute grabbed Heimdallr by the collar and shook him around, Frigg, the goddess of marriage, spoke up.

"If that boy came to the heavenly world, he would die. And it would be difficult for you to remain in the human world permanently. Isn't that the real reason you had to tearfully choose to live separately?"

"Please do not joke about that!! I-I am having enough trouble with this as it is!!"

Heimdallr then made an unnecessary comment as he hung in midair.

"I-if it's that much trouble, why don't you just break up with him? There is always the option of divorce. Frigg would know more about it than m-…gbeeehhh!?!?!?"

Heimdallr had expected Waltraute to silently start strangling him, but instead Frigg elegantly lifted up the sides of her long skirt and started kicking him in the back. The goddess had a lovely smile on her face all the while.

“Do you really think you should be using that word in the presence of the goddess of marriage?”

“Eee!! I’m sorry! Please help me!! Eeeee!!”

Heimdallr continued complaining, but Frigg did not care.

She was certain that stubborn Valkyrie would say something troublesome if she learned about divorce. People like her needed to be able to tell themselves they had to stay married because they had no other choice. After that, she would finally begin doing what she truly wanted to do.

“So how is the boy?” Frigg asked the newlywed Waltraute.

“Th-the same as always. He spends his mornings learning how to read and write and spends his afternoons training under a mead maker… Wait…ahhh!!”

Waltraute cried out when she glanced down toward the surface.

Frigg looked confused, so she looked down to the surface as well.

“Nwha ha ha ha!! So you are the soul of the human world it is said climbed the world tree and married a Valkyrie! I will take you with me and add you to my army of evil spirits!!”

“Who are you, lady?”

“I am no mere lady, boy? I am Hel. I am the queen of Niflheim, realm of the dead. I will give you the special privilege of referring to me by name. But only so you can plead for your life!!”

“A queen…I-I see…”

The boy’s expression made it clear he did not quite understand what was going on, but he bowed down nonetheless.

However, this seemed to provoke the queen of the realm of the dead.

“Y-you’re bowing down to me…? But everyone always calls me the cruel queen or says I ridicule people’s attachment to their life… D-don’t do that!! No one has ever done that before, so I don’t know how to respond…!”

“Hey, the old shaman guy said Niflheim is a world of ice. Is that true?”

“H-heh. Yes, it is. Niflheim is a prison of eternal ice! It is a frightening place that provides eternal suffering of hunger and cold to souls of the human world like you! Scary, isn’t it? You can cry if you want, but I’ll still be taking you to Niflheim!!”

“Wow, a world of ice. …Is the whole world really made of ice!? That’s amazing! I bet you can make tons of ice candy there!!”

"…Hah? No, wait…"

"Today's really hot, so I bet Waltraute would love it if I made her some ice candy! I have to go to Niflheim right away!!"

"You can't!! For a soul of the human world to go to Niflheim, it has to die! Do you understand? Do you really understand that!? Oh, damn. He's not listening at all. But…wait. Maybe I can just invite him like this. He said he wants to go, so there's nothing wrong with it, right? …Heh heh heh. So this is a soul rare enough to lead a Valkyrie astray. He will make a powerful addition to my army of evil spirits. Y-yeah, that's it. This is all for my army of evil spirits! I don't care about the boy at all! I need to make sure there are no mistaken ideas about that…"

And on that day a great number of Spears of Destroying Lightning fell down to the human world.

A local shaman was known to have said that abnormal weather was partially caused by something nearby.

Chapter 2: The Weapons of the Gods were not Created by the Gods

Part 1

As usual, Waltraute the Valkyrie was peering down to the human world of Midgard from the 3rd runway of Bifröst which acted as the entrance and exit of the heavenly world of Asgard. Waltraute was married to a boy who lived in the human world, but she had been forced to live apart from him due to various circumstances.

Frigg, the goddess married to the head god Odin, had lately started spending her time on the 3rd runway as well (she was more interested in happily watching Waltraute and the boy's relationship than she was interested in the boy himself), so that 3rd runway had been unusable for quite some time. There were even rumors that Iðunn, the goddess who grew the apples of immortality, was planning to open a street stall there. Heimdallr, the watchman who was in charge of Bifröst, had reached the state of resignation.

Then along came a goddess who was completely unable to pick up on the mood of the situation.

Appearance-wise, she seemed about the same age as Waltraute.

"Nyaho! It is I, Freyja, Asgard's most beautiful goddess. How are things for you fleeting stars that are hidden by the sun of my beauty!?"

Waltraute loudly clicked her tongue to express her annoyance at the intrusion.

"…Oh, it's the pig."

"Don't be so blunt, Miss Valkyrie!! It may be true that I am also known as Sýr which means sow, but I am a fertility god, so it can't be helped. Pigs and boars are common symbols of gluttony and fecundity."

"So why are you here?"

"I have of course come to congratulate you, Waltraute. Congratulate you for reaching life's graveyard!! Ga ha ha ha ha ha ha!!"

She seemed to be referring to marriage.

Freyja wiggled her hips, causing her pigtailed hair and the ends of her frilly outfit to shake about.

"Congratulations on the marriage, Waltraute!! Another star shining in the sky has gone out, making my own radiance all the brighter!! Isn't it great!? Isn't it wonderful!? Nya ha ha!!"

"…But aren't you married? What happened to Óðr?"

“He suddenly disappeared one day, so I am now transcendentally free!! I’m still receiving all sorts of proposals from the giants, but I just reject them all! I’m starting to get tired of their different efforts, though. One even teased Thor by hiding Mjölnir which made him cry!! Fwa ha ha!! It sure is tough being a popular girl!!”

Frigg had remained silent for the past bit not because she had been overwhelmed by Freyja’s presence but because she was desperately trying to contain her anger after having the purpose of her existence denied like that. No one was better at angering other women than that (self-proclaimed) goddess of beauty.

“Well? Well? Who is this boy that won over a Valkyrie?”

“Uuh… What does it matter? I would rather not tell a pervert like you.”

Waltraute was hesitant to tell her.

After all, Freyja was the goddess said to have forgotten her chastity inside her mother when she was born. She defiantly insisted it was part of her job as she was the goddess of fertility, but she clearly acted out of her own interests. She had even slept with 4 dwarves simply because she wanted the necklace called Brísingamen, so it was obvious she was simply crazy.

Waltraute was not about to introduce that boy to someone like that.

“Hm? So are the rumors of it being some fat, hairy, black-hearted old man true?”

“He is a boy!! Look, it is that slender but strong-hearted boy using that ash tree to stay out of the rain! Do not insult the one who won my hand, you fool!!”

“I see. I see.”

Waltraute immediately regretted having said that, so she began violently smashing her forehead against the 3rd runway and very nearly destroyed a portion of Bifröst. But it was too late.

The goddess of beauty peered down into the human world and said, “Oh, he looks so cute. So you’re into that kind of thing. Do you play the older sister character?”

“N-no!! This was the result of a serious competition! And I am one of the ones who must watch over the results of conflicts and competition in the human world. It just so happens that boy was on the winning side of the competition!!”

“But don’t you feel a bit lucky? At the very least, you have to think this is better than the hairy and black-hearted old man I mentioned before.”

“…”

Waltraute let fly a spear-like glance.

Heimdallr would have balled up his body as if he was trying to fit inside a wooden box, but Freyja merely folded her arms and grinned.

“But let me be honest here. That boy might be good enough for a roll in the hay or two, but is he really worth offering the rest of your life to? I would go for more of a dandy who…”

Before Freyja could get completely lost in her own world, the boy hiding from the rain in Midgard looked up into the sky.

He could of course not see all the way to Asgard with his naked eyes.

He simply looked up into the sky that was covered in rain clouds and said, “Hang in there, sun.”

Freyja, the goddess of fertility, accidentally got serious.

A malfunction of her powers as the goddess in charge of harvest and the weather began to cause a serious drought in the human world.

“Wait! Freyjaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!! Why are you letting my husband get to you!?”

“What!? Wh-what did I just do…?’

“Don’t act like you don’t know!! And the weather is under your brother Freyr’s jurisdiction! Are you really so horrible that you will butt in on someone else’s territory just to show off!?”

As Freyja worked to stop her nosebleed and regain her cool, the weather in Midgard became a calm sunny day.

With her bleeding stopped, Freyja cleared her throat and began spewing abusive language once more to regain the previous tone of the conversation.

“Anyway. How are things now that you have wandered into life’s graveyard aka marriage, Miss Valkyrie? Have your days of housework and looking after your husband given you joint pain and the smell of an old lady!?” Freyja’s tone made it obvious she knew just how rude she was being. “Oh, but I heard you are living apart. Have things cooled down so soon after the honeymoon? Gya ha ha! What a disaster! This is just a disaster!! Are you on the path to a break up just a few days after getting married!? That’s hilarious!!”

“Th-that is not true.”

“Nyah?”

“W-wait, no! I did not mean it like that, you fool! I was the loser and so I cannot have you insulting the victor!!”

“Fine, fine. So did something happen? Or is something coming up? Tell me, tell me.”

Freyja grinned and Waltraute's shoulders trembled as she responded in a low voice.

"…We have a date in 3 days."

"What?"

Freyja froze in place.

It seemed Frigg had also not known this because her eyes opened wide.

Waltraute awkwardly continued, "Also, I just got back from one. That is why I am observing the boy to determine his reaction. I need to know what I did right and what I did wrong."

"…You go on dates…even though you're married…?"

"How innocent!! Oh, Waltraute!! You are just so innocent!!"

Frigg seemed to especially lose her self-control over this. It was possible she had issues with Odin as a husband.

"This goes back to that original challenge. As I lost, I must do my best to serve the victor. For that reason, I must go on a date when that boy wishes for it. The name of the victory prize he asks for does not matter."

"So in other words, 'Ahh, I lost! But I am relieved because you have the courage to ask me on a date. Thank you, boy. Smooch smooch.' "

"Please explain to me what about my explanation led you to that conclusion."

"There was definitely a casting mistake in having that role played by that muscular machoman Heimdallr before. The high-pitched goddess Freyja is much better suited for the role!!"

Waltraute's sharp gaze was unable to stop the two goddesses.

The goddess of beauty moved in closer to Waltraute and asked, "Well, well? What's with the post-marriage dates? From that I'm going to assume the two of you haven't done it yet. I can't picture this at all, so tell me what this date you just went on was like."

"N-nothing happened that would make an interesting story."

Waltraute, the Valkyrie who was top class when it came to strength, began to tell the story…

Part 2

Waltraute lived in the heavenly world of Asgard while the boy lived in the human world of Midgard, so they did not often have a chance to speak with each other.

Waltraute had given the following instructions to the boy if he wanted to contact her:

“Whenever you wish to tell me something, tie a letter to the weather vane on your house’s roof. The two ravens will retrieve the letter and take it to me.”

Huginn and Muninn were fed up with being used for odd jobs, but they found Waltraute’s gaze too frightening to say no when she told them to act as carrier pigeons.

It all began with one of those letters.

When she saw the boy’s handwriting saying “I want to go on a date with you”, Waltraute magnificently overturned a container of an Asgard alcoholic drink and frantically headed down to Midgard.

“What kind of joke is this!? I would never go along with such a shameless demand!!”

“Yay, you came to go on a date with me!”

“Eh? No! That is not why I am here!! Do not continue the conversation without listening to me. Wait! Do not start unpacking that lunch!!”

“?”

“Do not look so puzzled, you fool. A competition. We must decide this with a competition! If you insist on making such an unreasonable demand, you must defeat me first!!”

When she had previously challenged him to see if he could climb the world tree Yggdrasil, it had all spun off in an unexpected direction. Waltraute had learned her lesson from that.

She was no longer going to hold back.

There was simply too great a difference between a Valkyrie and a human when it came to physical ability. Waltraute would win in almost any form of competition.

As such, Waltraute stood in a position where she could crush the boy’s hopes.

“O-okay. Then I challenge you to a game of Super Rune Duel Cards!!”

“Dammit!! You chose something that gives you the advantage thanks to the target demographic!!”

Waltraute started tearing at her beautiful blonde hair, but she was not completely ignorant of that card game that used wooden cards.

The Einherjar the Valkyries gathered and controlled were originally souls from Midgard. For that reason, the culture of Midgard had a way of leaking into Asgard.

And so…

“B-but we must ensure this competition is fair. We must determine each other’s strengths and weaknesses and set up strict rules to ensure-…”

“Duel start!!”

“Wait, why are you starting already!? Honestly, that is the problem with your age group…!”

“Eh heh heh. I get to play card games with Waltraute on our date.”

“This is our competition to see if said date even happens! This is not part of the date!!”

“I use contact on Thurisaz and Raido! Together, the two cards quadruple the damage dealt!!”

“Wait, wait! What do you mean together!?”

“You don’t know, Waltraute? It’s a new rule they added with the third edition.”

“I-I see. I suppose information taken from the dead would indeed be out of date. But I reverse Hagalaz! The damage is sent right back to you!!”

“They got rid of the reverse rule in the second edition.”

“Ehh!? Wait! You need to tell me that kind of thing ahead of time!”

“Okay, two more cards added for a total of four combined together. That’s 16 times the damage. And boom! There goes all your health!!”

“Vahh!! Vahh!!”

And before Waltraute could figure out what was going in, they had a date to go on.

Waltraute blushed, but she had no choice but to carry out her duty as the loser.

“Hm, hm. Hm, hm, hm! And then what happened, Waltraute!? Tell Freyja what happened on this date!!”

“U-um, it was a punishment, so it was nothing as enjoyable as you seem to be imagining.”

Waltraute continued the story while averting her gaze.

Whatever she might say, a loss was a loss.

And so she had to go on a date.

She could not bring a mere human boy to Asgard (Technically she could, but doing so would kill him), so Waltraute had to go to Midgard.

Normally, it would have been the boy’s duty to escort her, but he did not have the financial ability to do so at his age and he had no way of knowing anywhere beautiful enough to satisfy a Valkyrie that could travel freely through the 9 worlds and to any number of castles and palaces.

For that reason, Waltraute was in charge of deciding what they would do on their date. Her plan was to use an Asgard-born white horse to visit various sightseeing spots throughout the human world.

After they got on the horse, the boy said, “Why are you holding the reins from behind me?”

“Because you would fall off otherwise.”

“I feel like I’m being completely enveloped by you. Shouldn’t our positions be reversed?”

“With our difference in height, you would not be able to see anything from behind me.”

“Also, your armor looks like it would hurt because it’s so hard.”

“Y-you do not have to touch it directly! You fool!!”

“…”

“J-just enjoy the scenery!! Do not worry about me! I will show you a view that can only be seen from one of these Asgard-born horses that can easily travel any dangerous route!!”

Part 3

“And that is what happened.”

The goddess of marriage Frigg and the goddess of beauty Freyja had initially been brimming with curiosity, but they gradually grew less interested as they listened to the story.

Frigg was holding her head in her hands and seemed unable to speak, so Freyja chimed in.

“…Um, one quick question.”

“What?”

“Why were you in full armor during a date!? Meeting him like that is simply too surreal!”

“This is how a Valkyrie dresses! A-and despite how he looks, he is still a guy. Wh-wh-who knows what could happen!!”

“Eh? That’s out of the question even after you got married? Then what exactly is your goal? When are you going to join together!? And are you going to continue just leading him on even after marrying him!? If you do that, the boy’s libido is going to eventually explode out from within!!”

“Eh?” Waltraute’s body stiffened slightly. “…What? Human bodies can explode if you do not handle them properly?”

“No, no. That’s not what she-…” started Heimdallr the watchman, but he was silenced by a hand over the mouth by Freyja and a kick to the gut by Frigg.

They no longer cared if she was mistaken.

They had to correct the ridiculous way that Waltraute treated being a wife.

“This is dangerous. This is really dangerous. The countdown has probably already begun. Frigg would probably know better than me though since she rules over marriage.”

“Y-yes, that is right. Ho ho ho. Waltraute, marriage is a ceremony to allow a man and woman to come together and bring about the next generation. If you only go halfway and leave him hanging, it is like forcibly damming up a river. Once the river builds up and breaks the dam, you have quite a disaster on your hands.”

“…”

A frown remained on Waltraute’s face for a while.

The two goddesses were silently urging her to strip off her armor and to at least wear some cute clothes for the next date with the boy. But…

"…I am not sure I believe you."

"Tch!! Why do idiots only use their heads at the most inconvenient times!?"

"Heh heh heh. So I was right. You are simply trying to mess with our relationship for your own amusement! Yes, yes. Marriage is a bond between two souls!! We can be together forever without stooping to such indecent acts!!"

"…Eh? You're setting that aside forever?"

"You might have been raised to be too obsessed with fighting…"

The two goddesses held their heads in their hands, but they both decided what they would do next at the exact same moment.

It did not matter what it took.

They had to make that boy strip Waltraute of her armor!!

Part 4

And so the goddess of marriage Frigg descended to the human world of Midgard.

Frigg used Bifröst just like the Valkyries did, but it did not produce any flashy effects because she was not wearing the aurora armor. And that was just fine as far as Frigg was concerned.

Normally, it was the duty of the Valkyries to convey the will of Asgard, so the gods themselves did not often go to the human world. …One exception was Odin himself who would often head to Midgard while transformed into a human or animal (and he would usually induce killings or wars between humans). He set a very bad example for all the gods below him and completely ruined the idea that gods must not head to the human world.

By the way, it was often said carelessly crossing between the nine worlds could cause a war, but the only type of war the goddess of marriage was like to cause would be fights between couples. It was possible somewhere in the world on that day, a dragon-slaying warrior and a rune-using witch got into a serious fistfight.

Frigg was officially heading to Midgard in the name of celebrating a marriage occurring there, but after shocking the lucky bride and groom to the bottoms of their hearts, she dropped by the small house where a certain boy lived.

If she had entered through the front door, she would have surprised the boy's parents and made the whole situation more troublesome, so she entered directly through a window on the second floor.

"Good day, boy."

"Who are you, miss?"

"Good, good. Miss. Heh heh heh. You called me miss. Heh heh heh heh! Good, good!!"

After having unintentionally struck the bullseye, the boy merely tilted his head innocently, so Frigg frantically cleared her throat.

The boy may have possessed some kind of additional attack spell called Charm.

"Ahem. I am Frigg, the goddess that rules over marriage and Waltraute's boss. Technically, her boss is that war-obsessed idiot Odin, but I am taking over that role for now because he is surprisingly useless. He does do some things well, though."

"?"

"You do not need to understand. That is not what I came here to discuss." Frigg sat on the plain windowsill. "You have a date with Waltraute in three days, correct?"

“Ehh!? How did you know that!? Miss, are you a beautiful spy!?”

“Miss…heh heh…beautiful…heh heh heh heh heh!!!!! …No, I am not. I manage the nine Valkyries that Waltraute is one of. It is only natural I know her schedule. And I also know of a problem concerning that date.”

“...Can she not go? Is there something else she has to do?”

“No, no. Of course not. In fact, I approve of the date. But it is obvious the date will be a failure at this rate. So I want you to get rid of the reason behind my concern.”

“What is the reason behind your concern?”

“Well.” Frigg grinned. “To be blunt, Waltraute’s armor. As long as that is removed, everything should go well.”

Part 5

Meanwhile, Heimdallr the watchman desperately tried to hold back a Valkyrie. Ultimately, Waltraute knocked him out of the way and started stomping down the third runway.

The goddess of beauty Freyja started sweating a bit.

“Oh, dear.”

“Hey, Freyja!! What is going on? Why are you preventing me from seeing what is happening in the human worl-…waaahhh!? Why is that boy with Lady Frigg!?”

“Just so you know, she is not trying to seduce that boy into cheating on you. …If anyone’s going to do that, I’ll make sure it’s me. I don’t wanna get married, but the thought of taking him as a quick snack makes me drool.”

“I know that and I have no interest in who that boy speaks with!!”

“ ‘Nooo! Boy, only look at me, Waltraute! I’ll even let you use my lap as a pillow and feed you cherries from my mouth.’ ”

“E-enough of your nonsense, you fool. I am asking for an explanation of what is going on!!”

Waltraute shoved Freyja out of the way and looked down at the human world of Midgard.

When she did, her magically heightened sense of hearing picked up the boy’s words.

“Eh? I don’t need to do that.”

“Why not? You were attracted to Waltraute’s femininity, weren’t you? Then don’t you want her to remove that armor and wear a cute outfit at least while on a date?”

“Hmm. But I like that armor.”

And…

Waltraute averted her gaze slightly with her arms folded and let out a “hmph”. Needless to say, something belying her attitude could be seen on her face.

Freyja replied in shock, “I guess he is a young boy. Is he just at the age where they love swords and shields?”

“You fool, this is not something so simple. His unclouded eyes have seen the pure white light that is the essence of a holy Valkyrie.”

But then the boy in the human world added, “I like that armor because it’s sexy.”

“That’s the essence!! That’s the essence of it right there!!” shouted the goddess of beauty Freyja as she held her sides and rolled around.

Waltraute then began destroying pieces of the rainbow runways of Bifröst left and right.

Part 6

However, the goddess Frigg had her own objective, so she used various arguments to convince the boy. Ultimately, she succeeded in motivating the boy by convincing him that he would enjoy the date even more if Waltraute removed her armor.

Frigg explained, “The armor worn by Valkyries is special, so it cannot be destroyed by normal blades. Naturally, it would be difficult to remove by hand. …Talking about ‘removing an aurora’ makes no sense, right?”

“Then what am I supposed to do?”

“Head to Niðavellir.” Frigg responded with a smile to the boy’s innocent question. “That is the underground world of the dwarves. They are extremely skilled with their hands, so they are the ones to create the tools and weapons we gods use. If you are able to receive the help of a dwarf, you can have a tool made that can remove a Valkyrie’s armor.”

“I see.”

Normally, no human from Midgard would ever think of approaching another world deep underground, but as usual, this boy had no such misgivings.

And it seemed the goddess of marriage Frigg intended to let him head off after giving him only a cursory explanation.

“The reason the previous date was a failure is likely because Waltraute was unable to get her mind off of work while still in her work outfit. If she removes that armor and puts on a cute outfit, you will get to see a different side of her.”

“Oh… Thanks, miss.”

“Heh heh heh heh heh heh heh!! Then I will be going. I should really stay with you for safety’s sake, but as the goddess of marriage, I cannot come between a man and woman any further than this.”

“Bye bye, miss.”

『全知全能の存在にして
全ての頂点とされるが……』

オーディン

主神にして戦争の神。フリズスキャルヴという玉座から、長い年月をかけこの世界の歴史を眺めてきた。彼の神槍グングニルは決して敵を射損なわず、貫いた後は自動的に持ち主のもとに戻る。ヴァルトラウテら戦乙女九姉妹に命じ、戦死者の軍団エインヘルヤルを組織しようとしている。これは、いずれ来る巨人族との最終戦争ラグナロクに備えるためである。

『胡散臭い美形キャラ』

ロキ

悪戯好きの神様で、『アース神族のジョーカー』とも呼ばれている。外見は非常に優れた容姿で、様々な女神にちょっかいをかけては問題を引き起こしている。その興味は多岐にわたり、巨大狼フェンリルや冥界の女王ヘルの誕生も彼が原因。そしてロキの次なるターゲットは、ヴァルトラウテの結婚相手である人間の少年のようで——。

『職人気質な鍛冶職人』

ドワーフ

地下世界ニダヴェリールに住む、背丈は低いが無骨な種族。彼らのアイデンティティは、あらゆる『道具』を精製すること。その技術は神であるアース神族にすら真似ができない。雷神トールのミョルニルや主神オーディンのグングニルもドワーフが作った。

『大人なのにツインテール!な端麗女神』

フレイヤ

この世界でも最も美しい、豊作と天候を司る女神。全てにおいて天真爛漫で、さらに性にも奔放というフリーダムな性格。無類のアクセサリー好きで、自らの美しさについても一点の曇りのない自信を持つ。ヴァルトラウテと人間の少年の結婚事情には、オーディンの妻であるフリッグと共にお節介を焼いている。

“Heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh!!”

Frigg left with a smile as if she was some kind of gentleman thief. She seemed to truly enjoy that innocent appraisal over any form of flattery.

And so…

After his trip up towards the heavenly world of Asgard, the boy began a trip to the underground world of Niðavellir.

Part 7

“Y’know…”

A single goddess looked annoyed up in the heavenly world of Asgard.

It was Freyja.

“Lady Frigg is trying her best, but will this really turn out okay?”

“What do you mean?”

“He may look cute, he may be the type I just want to devour, and he may make me drool, but isn’t that boy a little too delicate? Simply put, I doubt he can make it to the underground world of Niðavellir on foot.”

“Th-that is where you are wrong! Despite how he looks, he has a strong core. He is the boy who did not hesitate to take on the world tree. Heading to the underground world will be a simple… Ah!?”

“…Hee hee.”

“Why are you grinning like you are holding back from saying something, Freyja!? Is it that strange for the loser to refuse to overlook any insults turned toward the victor!?”

“Hah. Not at all. ‘My darling is so powerful and cool. I will not let anyone speak badly of him.’ ”

“I take it you want tonight’s main dish to be a sow ginger sauté…”

“Then how about we make a bet to turn this into a competition? I’ve been wanting a new accessory anyway, so if that boy does not make it to the underground world of Niðavellir, you give me those decorative feathers on your head!!”

“Wha-…? If I lose these, I will have no idea who I even am! No one will be able to tell it is me!”

“But I thought he was going to make it? You’ll win the bet, so does it even matter? You said that boy has a strong core, so he can easily make it to Niðavellir, right? Hee hee.”

“Uuh…!! B-but… What do I get if I win this competition?”

“Then Freyja here will give you a very hands-on lecture on what pleasures can be achieved between two wome-…Nothing, nothing. I was just joking.”

Waltraute pulled out her Spear of Destroying Lightning, so the goddess of beauty Freyja quickly corrected herself.

“Then how about this: As the goddess of harvest and fertility, I will give that boy an abundant harvest from the asparagus growing in his garden.”

“That still does not actually benefit me…but if that boy is satisfied I suppose he might be less likely to challenge me to strange and reckless competitions. If I look at it as adjusting the frequency of future competitions, it does benefit me.”

“ ‘I, Waltraute, want to see that boy’s joyous face. I will go to any effort at any opportunity in order to see it, so rub my head, darling!’ ”

“How about you repeat that nonsense after I hang you upside down?”

“If you’re going to tie me up, make sure my legs are spread.”

At any rate, the competition had been set.

Waltraute was betting the boy would make it to the underground world of Niðavellir while Freyja was betting he would not.

“(Idiot. Have you forgotten what will happen if that boy does make it to Niðavellir? I look forward to seeing your cute form after that boy removes your aurora armor, Waltraute. Nya ha ha!)”

“Hm? Did you say something?”

“Nyothing at all! Okay, now that the bet has been made, let’s see what’s going on in Midgard!!”

“Then again…” Waltraute may have consented to the competition, but she seemed worried about something else. “Hey, Freyja.”

“What?”

“Will that boy be okay? When he tried to climb the world tree Yggdrasil to reach Asgard, he almost died due to issues with the atmospheric pressure and altitude. There will not be any trouble like that this time, will there?”

“It’s hard to say,” replied Heimdallr the watchman in all seriousness. “The pressure and altitude will not be an issue this time because he is heading down. But heading to the underground world means heading deeper and deeper into a cave. As the space grows narrower and narrower, he might not have enough oxygen, and it’s possible he could run across some volcanic poisonous gases down there. You can’t exactly say the journey is without its risks.”

“Is there no way to take measures against those risks? I do not want to have to act at the last second like last time.”

Everyone else there thought “that is only because you were too stubborn”, but they did not dare say it.

Heimdallr honestly replied, “I hear they use canaries in mines. When the oxygen is too low or dangerous gases are floating around, they react in a special way to inform you.”

“…”

Waltraute then turned to the two messenger ravens Muninn and Huginn.

They both began protesting.

“I don’t want to do a dangerous job like that!!”

“No good can come from acting as a sensor by being the first to collapse!”

The Valkyrie then slowly held up the Spear of Destroying Lightning.

“If you can make that much noise, you are perfect for the role. Now go.”

After Waltraute sent the two ravens to the boy, Freyja spoke up.

“But how are we supposed to see what happens in the underground world? We can’t see down their just by looking down from the runway.”

“Heimdallr. Hand over the horn.”

Heimdallr’s shoulders jumped when she held her hand out toward him.

Waltraute ignored that and continued.

“The Gjallarhorn. It stretches down to Jötunheimr so you can use it to drink the water of wisdom, correct? If we have it stretch down to the underground world, we can use it to view the boy’s movements.”

“Y-you can’t!! The Gjallarhorn is also used as a siren for the heavenly world! The final battle of Ragnarök could start at any moment! My duty as watchman is to inform everyone if I detect its coming!! So I cannot let go of the Gjallarhorn no matter wha-…!!”

“What a pain.” Waltraute shook her head slowly. “Are you really asking for me to become a tyrant once more?”

“Me too!? You’re going to do to me what you did to Muninn and Huginn!?”

He was in danger of becoming a heavenly meal.

After Waltraute swiped the horn from Heimdallr, it stretched out using magical power. It quickly stretched all the way to the human world of Midgard before stabbing down through the ground and into the cave leading to the underground world.

Waltraute and Freyja peered in through the mouth of the horn.

“Hm. It looks like we can watch using this.”

“I can kind of see why Lord Odin feared this marriage of yours. But as long as the galactic pretty girl Freyja can enjoy it, none of that matters!!”

“Are you coming up with groundless suspicions again, you fool?”

Thanks to the Gjallarhorn’s magical effects, it would easily move around even while stabbed in the ground as long as it was moved slightly from above. They would have no problems keeping the boy in sight.

As they viewed what was happening underground, they spotted the boy double-checking his possessions at what was more or less the entrance to the cave.

“Handkerchief: check. Snacks for when I get hungry: check. Water bottle: check. Okay, time to go!”

“He’s packing that lightly again!? He’s clearly only wearing sandals. And he doesn’t have any kind of light despite heading into a cave!!”

“Whoops, my hand slipped,” said Freyja unconvincingly as she tossed a torch into the mouth of the horn.

After a hard clattering noise echoed through the horn for a bit, the torch fell out from the roof of the cave the boy was in.

“?”

The boy looked puzzled, but then he picked up the torch and headed further into the cave.

“Wasn’t that against the rules?”

“We never set any rules.”

After casually turning aside Waltraute’s question, Freyja went back to watching.

The cave had many complexly intertwining paths that stretched out over vast areas. Plus, the underground world was split into two large categories. The boy found himself at a junction between many different paths. Among them, one led up to the surface, one led to the underground world of Niðavellir, and one led to the underground world of Svartálfaheimr.

“Niðavellir… Nidavlure…”

“Oh, dear… It’s so hard to say, he’s started to say it wrong!!”

“He’s definitely going to get lost.”

“But there is a sign right there telling him which way to go…”

“If that other path leads to Svartálfaheimr, doesn’t that mean the dark elves come through here? I wonder if those prank-loving elves have switched out or altered the sign.”

The residents of the heavenly world grew quite worried, but the boy continued on into the cave with no real trouble.

The ravens Muninn and Huginn were secretly watching over the boy, but they did not start yelling about lack of oxygen or poisonous gas.

“Hm. This is quite normal. Nothing interesting is happening,” complained Freyja.

“Yes, this would be boring to the one who bet he would give up. But this is going extremely well for me since I bet he would make it safely. Nothing happening is for the best. All hail nothing happening! Who needs drama!?”

“ ‘Oh, I’m so worried. Waltraute is so worried about that boy. I hope he doesn’t get hurt. I hope he doesn’t get lost. Once he gets back, I’m going to give him a nice big hug!’ ”

“Do not start spewing strange nonsense just because you are bored, you fool!”

“By the way, aren’t you kind of denying the whole reason Valkyries exist by praising normalcy? Your job is to watch over and retrieve the souls of humans who die in dramatic ways.” Freyja gave an annoyed sigh. “But he’s headed to Niðavellir in order to request the dwarves make a tool for him, right? But don’t they make their items out of gold? And there are always a lot of extra issues to go with their tools. I wonder if he’ll be okay. I’d say the real challenge is yet to come.”

“Shh, wait. Someone is approaching that boy.”

The area near the entrance to the cave was very complex, but once one got onto the route heading to Niðavellir, it was just a single path following Yggdrasil’s root. A figure could be seen walking toward the boy from the other end of the passageway.

“Is it a dwarf?”

“They aren’t that tall. Ugeh!? That’s-…!!” shouted Waltraute when the figures face was illuminated by the boy’s torch.

The boy did not know who it was and the figure spoke to him.

“Oh? A resident of Midgard here? How unexpected.”

“Who are you, mister?”

“Ha ha ha. Sorry, but your skill is useless against a male god.”

The figure merely smiled at the sort of talk that had elated Frigg.

As he smiled, the male god said, “I am Loki. My origins are pretty complicated, but I am one of the Æsir.”

Meanwhile, the Valkyrie was trying to throw any and all weapons available to her into the mouth of the horn.

Freyja was frantically trying to stop her from destroying that treasure of the gods and the military level of the nine worlds.

“D-do not stop me!! That is Loki! *That is Loki!!* He killed the god of light Baldr as a joke, shaved off the blonde hair of the harvest goddess Sif as a gag, chaotically fathered both Fenrir and Hel, and is one of the primary causes of the final battle of Ragnarök!! It is so obvious he is lying about this being unexpected! He is definitely waiting to pull some kind of trick!!”

“That’s almost certainly true, but just calm down!! You’re about to destroy the world!!”

“I must do this to preserve the fairness of our competition!!”

“Yes, yes. I’m sure you want to go kiss that boy right now and just kiss and kiss and kiss!!”

Freyja tried to hold Waltraute’s hands behind her back but was thrown off. The giant boar the goddess of beauty usually rode around on slammed into the Valkyrie to buy some time. Meanwhile, the conversation between the boy and Loki continued in the underground cave.

“What are you doing here?” asked the boy.

“I was having the dwarves make a magic tool for me. That bastard Thor was really pissed that I shaved Sif’s head. I needed some replacement hair.”

“That’s why I’m here, too.”

“You also shaved a goddess?”

“I came here to have a tool made.”

“Oh, so that’s it. But ordinary methods won’t work with those dwarves. If you simply ask them, they’ll take an exorbitant fee and then run off without giving you anything.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. There’s a certain trick you have to use when asking something of them.”

Goose bumps appeared all over Waltraute’s body.

“He’s creepy!! That smile of his is creepy!! Vahh, vahh!! Get away from that boy right this instant!!”

“Just calm down!!” said Freyja. “While he’s most certainly a pervert, you’re in luck. He’s a male god! He won’t try anything of that sort with the boy, so just calm down!!”

“That is not what I was talking about! The fairness of the competition and the boy’s life are both at risk!!”

“Yes, I know what you claim your reason is. But this grouping won’t result in any kissing, so don’t worry!!”

“I-I suppose so.”

Waltraute finally calmed down a bit.

But then Heimdallr made an unnecessary comment.

“But what if he’s gay?”

“!! That’s right! This is dangerous after all! And come to think of it, Loki transformed into a horse, was mounted by a different horse controlled by a giant, and then gave birth to Sleipnir!! He was both a horse and the bottom!! Is there any less trustworthy god when it comes to sexual preferences!?”

“Dammit, Heimdallr! Why did you have to say that!? D-don’t worry, don’t worry. Such a turn of events may make me drool, but this isn’t going to turn into anything of that sort that maidens would love to see!! Calm down, calm down.”

As she pacified the angry Valkyrie, Freyja wiped a cold sweat from her brow.

Meanwhile, the conversation in the underground cave continued.

“What do I do to get them to make me a tool?”

“It’s simple. You have to…”

Part 8

After receiving advice from Loki, the boy parted ways with the male god and headed further into the cave.

And up in the heavenly world of Asgard, Waltraute was wrapped in self-hatred after awakening from her anger.

“How much effort am I going to give for that boy…?”

“Well, you are married to him, so it isn’t wrong to react somewhat.”

The boy stopped to eat his snacks, drink from his water bottle, and fill his empty stomach with hard rye bread, but he finally made it to the end of the cave.

He had arrived at the entrance to the underground world of Niðavellir where the dwarves lived.

“So he has safely arrived at the other world. Ha ha ha!! I win the bet!!”

“Yes, yes. I’ll make sure the boy gets tons of asparagus. I’ll give him a forest of asparagus.”

“…Why do you not seem the least bit upset that you lost?”

(Because this means the project to strip you of your armor is well on its way to success. Hee hee hee.)

The goddess of beauty Freyja hid her true intentions and instead said, “Wasn’t the difficulty level of the previous challenge to climb the world tree just too high?”

“H-hmph! That was a competition officially arranged with a Valkyrie to manipulate her fate in the form of marriage! It was only natural for it to be that difficult!!”

“Can you make up your mind over whether you want to be hard on him or soft on him?”

The boy entered the underground world of Niðavellir.

Unlike the damp cave, the inside glowed with gold. Literally. All the buildings and roads were made from pure gold. That glow seemed a bit gaudy to the residents of the heavenly world, but it was an excellent scene for stimulating human greed.

The dwarves were only about half the height of an adult human and their skin was dark. They all mined and forged metals as both miners and blacksmiths.

But…

“Excuse me. Where is the blacksmith?” asked the boy.

“I don’t know,” replied a dwarf.

“I need the blacksmith. Y’know, the guy who heats up metal and then beats it.”

“?”

“No, no. That isn’t going to work at all, boy,” said Waltraute as she held her head, but her voice could not reach the boy. “All dwarves possess skills as a blacksmith, so there is no specialist known as ‘the blacksmith’. The person you are looking for is right before your eyes, but you will never find him if you do not know how to ask.”

“…You sound more like a mother speaking to her child than a newlywed.”

After repeating that failed exercise a few times, even that boy realized something was off. He grabbed one of the dwarves walking along the golden path and asked him a question.

“Tell me which dwarf can make me a tool.”

“Y-yes,” said Waltraute. “That’s right. That is what you must say. It certainly took you some time to figure out something so simple. You really are hopeless…”

“That look on your face says quite a lot, you newlywed wife. Should I repeat out loud what that grin of yours is saying?” said Freyja.

The dwarf led the boy to his workshop.

The dwarf asked, “What would you like made?”

“Um…Mrs. Frigg said I could enjoy my next date more if I had a tool to remove a Valkyrie’s armor.”

“Ah!?” exclaimed the Valkyrie in realization. “I was so caught up in that competition that I forgot success means having my armor removed!!”

“So you finally caught on, hm!? But it’s too late now!!”

As Waltraute frantically tried to cover up her chest with both hands, the dwarf’s next question reached her ears.

“Can you pay?”

“But…wait. Wait a second!” said Freyja.

“What?”

“Can we really have that dwarf make this golden tool?”

“O-of course not!! It is simply unthinkable to have my armor stripped off! B-but…I suppose… I suppose if that boy gets this tool made and earnestly asks me, I will have no choice but to go along with it…”

“That’s not what I meant, you exhibitionist,” spat out Freyja coolly. “The tools created by the dwarves are of such high quality that not even the Æsir can copy them. Even the lightning god Thor’s Mjölnir and the head god Odin’s Gungnir were made by the dwarves.”

“What is your point?”

“They put a curse on the gold they use,” continued Freyja with a serious expression. “Especially when it comes to those that shirk the bill like Loki suggested he do. Even the tools we use have a dwarf curse on them. The reason we remain unharmed is because our properties as gods repels the curse. But if a human who cannot repel it was to hold them…”

“…”

“Loki stole some gold from the dwarf named Andvari and gave it to the human Siegfried. It became one of the reasons behind the death of that hero who even sliced the dragon Fafnir in two. The magic sword Dáinsleif is usable by human hands, but it is also said to be one of the triggers for Ragnarök. Surely you have heard the stories. It is often said that humans cannot fully use the weapons of the gods, but that is a lie. In truth, the humans cannot withstand the curse put on the weapons by the dwarves.”

“Th-th-then…” Waltraute asked a question in a trembling voice. “What will happen once that boy accepts the golden tool the dwarf makes?”

“Hmm.” Freyja looked straight upwards. “He’ll probably die.”

Part 9

And in Valhalla, the great hall of the heavenly world, the head god Odin was plotting.

“Honestly, I didn’t know what to do when Loki showed up. But now that boy will finally join the war dead.”

“What do you mean, father?”

That question was asked by the lightning god Thor who was Odin’s son.

Thor had been thoroughly beaten by a pissed Waltraute last time and had been on the verge of losing any meaning to his existence thanks to losing in a competition of lightning, but he was just barely holding onto his position as the lightning god.

Odin arrogantly replied to Thor from his throne.

“Well, it seems my wife Frigg and some others are tempting that boy into something. I have been watching on all the while, but I realized that allowing it to happen is better for us than to try to stop it.”

“So we let him have a dwarf create this tool?”

“Yes. The dwarves’ curses are not enough for us Æsir. But humans do not have that same protection. If they are handed a dwarf tool, there is only one possible result.” Odin grinned. “Did he not learn his lesson last time? Trying to cross to another world only brings death.”

“Oh, oh. Ohh!! I get it now. This will add that perseverant and courageous boy to the ranks of the Einherjar war dead! That is excellent!”

“Isn’t it, though!? Midgard is filled with all sorts of humans, but not many have tried to cross over to two other worlds!! Given the awe the average soul born in the human world feels for the world tree and the general unease they feel towards other worlds, they would find this completely unthinkable!! This boy will make an amazing war dead! And then the Wagner-style group of nine Valkyries will return to normal. Our preparations for Ragnarök will be perfect!! Ah hah hah! Gah hah hah!!”

The goddess of marriage Frigg held her head in her hands when she saw how pathetic the head god had become.

“Don’t tell me you actually think this will progress exactly like that.”

“You screwed up this time, Frigg!! I won’t do a single thing. After all the trouble you went to save that boy’s life, you have now handed his soul to me!!”

“…Sigh. You sound like some kind of great demon king.” Frigg sighed as she felt a serious headache coming on. “And do you really think this did not occur to me when I put together my plan?”

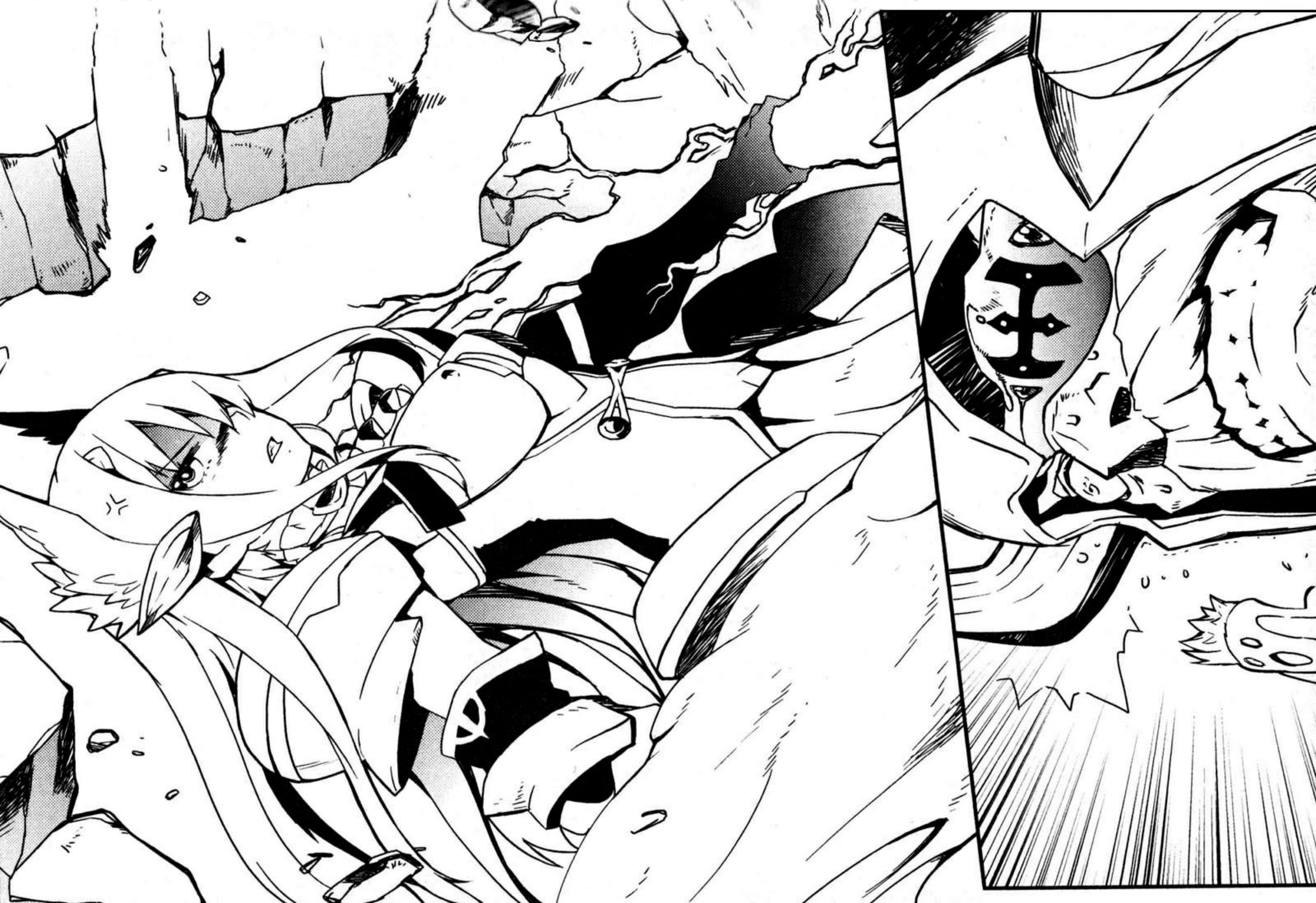
“It doesn’t matter what you say now! It’s too late!! That boy has already ordered that dwarf to create a golden tool. Once he received the tool from the dwarf, the curse will activate. A soul born in the human world has no way of defending against it. Even if a Valkyrie and a goddess are protecting him from afar, he cannot escape his fate. That level of protection isn’t enough. You need the protection we gods are born with to repel a dwarf’s curse!!”

Frigg was shaking her head at a loss for words, but she then added, “You two should really be more worried about a more pressing danger.”

“Hm?”

“What do you mean, mother?”

“You may claim to just be watching, but you plan to bring that boy to join the war dead if this does not go well, right? Now how did you order Waltraute to deal with people who manipulate pure thoughts like that?”



“……Oh.”

The trauma from the other day came back to Odin.

With a great roar and a bluish-white flash of light, the wall of the great hall was smashed from the outside. A single Valkyrie stomped in through the rubble.

“E-eee!! Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!”

Odin was completely shaken by this development. He frantically tried to grab the holy spear Gungnir, but a Spear of Destroying Lightning mercilessly stabbed into the weapon. Sparks flew and Gungnir rolled into a corner of the great hall.

While standing in a foolish pose because his grasp had reached only air, tears filled Odin’s eyes.

“I-I’m the head god!! The head god!!”

“Rank and strength are unrelated, you fool. Do you need to be ripped apart before the giant wolf Fenrir devours you?”

“Shit!! War has been distorted again because that boy carelessly traveled between the nine worlds!!”

Waltraute had become more frightening than a deadly dragon, but Frigg merely sighed.

“Waltraute, calm down a bit.”

“Come to think of it, you are the one behind it this time!!”

“Th-that’s right! That’s right!” chimed in Odin. “I did nothing this time. I only watched! It was Frigg that led that boy to the underground world of Niðavellir! She is the one that told him to have the dwarves make him a golden tool!! This is all her fault!!”

Frigg spoke to Waltraute while ignoring Odin who was charging down the path of the pathetic.

“Like I said: calm down a bit. Don’t worry. This will not end like that bearded old man say it will.”

“…What do you mean?”

“It is true that the golden tools and weapons created by the dwarves are cursed. And it is true a human could not withstand that curse.” Frigg admitted all that, but she continued. “But there is a certain trick regarding that curse.”

“?”

Part 10

She was still not entirely satisfied, but Waltraute returned to Bifröst with the goddess of marriage Frigg. When they arrived, the goddess of beauty Freyja spoke while peering down from the third runway to the underground world of Niðavellir.

“Oh!! Look, look! This has gotten interesting!!”

“What do you mean?”

With a suspicious look, Waltraute peered into the Gjallarhorn.

“Here. Will this work?” asked the dwarf.

“Wow, wow!! Thanks!!” replied the boy.

“W-wait!! Isn’t that dwarf handing him the golden tool he made!?” cried Waltraute. “He’ll be taken out by the dwarf’s curse!!”

“Shh. Look more closely, Waltraute.”

“It’s a multi-tool knife! It opens up!!” exclaimed the boy.

“Ha ha ha. Each tool inside automatically removes a portion of the Valkyrie’s armor. Just press the button and hold the tool out. It will do the rest on its own.”

“…What?” said Waltraute. “It does not look like he is being affected by the curse.”

“Of course not. It isn’t cursed,” replied Frigg nonchalantly.

“What?”

Waltraute froze in place and the goddess of marriage continued speaking.

“The dwarves only put a curse on the gold because the Æsir did not pay them an amount worthy of the effort the dwarves put in. Most of the time, the tools were taken without payment at all. In the worst cases, the dwarves were threatened into making the tools with a blade pressed up against them.”

“Well, with that bearded old man who loves war as the main god, the gods are all overflowing with brute strength and little else.”

“When made to make the tools under those conditions, it isn’t surprising that a curse or two was added. But those war-obsessed idiots who think it is only natural to speak through their power may not be able to understand such subtleties.”

“Th-then…?”

“You snapped and came to attack Valhalla partway through, right? You missed what happened in the middle. Freyja, could you explain to Waltraute what happened while she was away?”

“Um... but nothing very dramatic happened.” Freyja’s gaze wandered into the sky as she casually opened her mouth. “When the dwarf heard what the boy wanted, he asked about payment. He bluntly asked how much money the boy had brought.”

“Normally, the Æsir would either lie at that point or use their brute strength to threaten the dwarf.”

“The boy said the little he had on him was all he owned and therefore was all he could pay. I think it was about 7 silver coins.”

“That must have angered the dwarf. You said they needed to be paid an amount worthy of their effort, right? This is a tool made with the same handicraft as the weapons of the gods. Seven silver coins from Midgard would never be enough.”

“But that isn’t what happened.”

“?”

“When the dwarf saw those shabby silver coins, he asked the boy how much time it took him to gather the coins.” Freyja shrugged. “And the boy said it took him about a full month of work. What was it he said? I think it was something about it being what he earned helping out the mead maker he apprentices under.”

“…”

“But the dwarf finally smiled and said he would have to put in a month’s worth of effort to match it. It was horrible. A sparkling beauty like me hates, hates, hates that kind of sweaty conversation.”

“That is what happened,” concluded Frigg. “The dwarves do not care about how much money is given. They put in enough work to match the effort put into acquiring the money. For the Æsir who rule the nine worlds, a giant pile of gold coins can be acquired with little to no effort. That will not get anything out of the dwarves. And they feel disappointment and hatred toward those who fail to pay even that amount.”

“But…that boy…was different?”

“The dwarves’ curse is a reversal of their sense of professionalism and their sincerity. The curse appears when their pride as a blacksmith is betrayed. If a serious negotiation is made and their skills are respected, there will be no curse. And, Waltraute, you should know better than anyone what kind of person that boy is. It was my knowledge of who he is that told me this plan would

work. In other words…" Frigg paused for a second. "Odin and the others brought about their own ruin by trying to use a challenge the boy had no chance of losing. Do you still have any reason to be mad?"

Part 11

It seemed the entire issue had been cleanly wrapped up, but one problem remained for Waltraute.

Yes.

“That boy now has a tool to remove a Valkyrie’s armor, doesn’t he!? Wh-what is this…? I feel a silent pressure telling me to strip!”

“…Yeah, but going on a date in full armor is just creepy. The military is all sweaty and nasty!! A boy does not want that from a girl!! Or do you think your husband has some ridiculous parameters like a sweat fetish!?”

“You fool! Of course I do not want to hear that we have to be in a gym during summer for him to be happy!! But…!!”

“Then strip! Strip off that armor! Strip! Strip!!”

“I do not like it… I do not like it, but since he has the golden tool, am I even able to resist? After all, the weapons and tools created by the dwarves are directly linked to the attributes of the gods. Just like the lightning god Thor must wield the lightning hammer Mjölnir and the head god Odin must wield the holy spear Gungnir, a tool to remove a Valkyrie’s armor must have the ability to remove my armor.”

“If you understand, then we need to decide what cute outfit you’ll be wearing! Will it be a nice dress? Or maybe some tight pants? Gwa ha ha ha ha ha!! Or maybe you can try some underwear that’s strings need to be tied together in such a complex way that no one would ever wear them under normal circumstances!!”

“Even if it is nothing but your wild delusions, that is going too far!!”

“Damn, this is one annoying Valkyrie,” complained Freyja, but Heimdallr once more added an unnecessary comment.

“Um, if you are that unwilling to remove your armor, can’t you just resist? Even if he has a tool to remove your armor, he is still only human. If you actually tried, you could…gyah, gyah, gyaaaaahhhhhhh!?!?!?”

The giant boar Freyja always rode around on slammed into Heimdallr and dragged him around the runway.

Freyja refused to have Waltraute grow stubborn once more thanks to an unnecessary comment.

Waltraute climbed onto her white horse while Freyja saw her off with a smile.

“I am going to head off for my date. We arranged this three days ago, so I have no choice!!”

“Okay, okay. If you like, you could reward the winner with some bonus points by bringing the goddess of love and lust along for a threeso-…never mind.”

The goddess of beauty shrank down when she saw the tip a Spear of Destroying Lightning.

Waltraute and the white horse used Bifröst to break their “existence” down to individual particles and descend to Midgard while creating an unnatural aurora across the sky.

Once the Valkyrie was gone, a smiling figure arrived at the third runway.

She was the goddess of marriage Frigg.

“…How is it going?”

“It’s just starting. Oh, Waltraute just met up with the boy!”

“Oh! Waltraute just led the boy to a deserted water mill!!”

“Well, it would have been quite a shock to the boy’s parents if she headed into his house. They would probably think their son was going to die soon.”

“F-fine,” said Waltraute down in the human world. “If you do not like my armor, you may remove it. But only in private.”

“Seriously!?” exclaimed Freyja. “She’s going to let the boy do it himself!? I-is this the scenario where the older girl teaches the little boy how to do it!?”

“I have prepared a number of outfits appropriate for a date according to the fashion sense of the human world,” continued Waltraute. “But my armor must be removed in order to change into them.”

“Ehh!? That’s what she’s doing it for!? She’s only stripping to prepare for the date!? That water mill is your goal point, so why are thinking about going somewhere else from there!? She really is the queen of the cock teases!! She’s such an amateur that you would almost think she was an expert!!”

“Does Waltraute know what is supposed to happen at the end of this date?”

While still probably having no idea what it meant, the boy pulled out the golden tool he had the dwarf make for him. Several devices opened up on their own from the multi-tool knife.

“I-I had not seen it up close like this before. It really is amazing. P-please be gentle.”

“This is my first time, so I don’t really know how to do it.”

“Go slowly. Just go slowly, okay?”

Freyja shouted out, “Just listening to this makes it sound really erotic!! I can’t believe she is actually trying to keep away from that!!”

“As the goddesses of marriage and lust, this almost feels like blasphemy…”

At any rate, the situation was bound to improve at least somewhat once the Valkyrie’s armor was removed.

If she removed that armor that was the symbol of her professionalism and put on some cute feminine clothes, they might catch a glimpse of Waltraute’s private side.

That was the point of a date.

If those two were going to deepen their relationship without using the attributes of those goddesses of marriage and lust, it might take quite a bit of time. But they had plenty of time. In that case, letting things develop at those two’s pace could possibly lead to deeper bonds than trying to rush things.

And that was why the two goddesses simply watched on.

“Huh?” said the boy.

“What?”

“It needs 8 devices to fully remove your armor, but that leaves one device it doesn’t use.”

“Come to think of it,” muttered the goddess of marriage Frigg. “The dwarves make their devices out of gold, but they will add on an extra tool if they have excess materials. Even the gods’ primary weapons often have ‘extras’ added on.”

“Yeah, and those extras can alter the rankings of the gods. Those dwarves really are something.”

As the goddesses spoke, the situation was growing odd down in the human world of Midgard.

“Hmm. Let’s try it out.”

“Are you sure that is a good idea?”

“No, but here goes.”

“If you don’t know, then don’t bring it ou-…waahh!!”

Waltraute let out a rare urgent shout.

Frigg and Freyja frantically looked back down to the surface. The following scene was displayed there.

The golden multi-tool knife in the boy's hand had some tentacle-like objects slithering out of it. They were much too flexible to think they were made of metal. Their numbers, length, and size were so great, they seemed to completely ignore the law of conservation of mass.

"Wh-wh-what are those!?" shouted Waltraute. "What are they used for!?"

"? I don't know. What could they be for?" replied the boy.

"N-no, do not look so puzzled. …I mean…well…I can take a guess that they are used for…um…you know…"

"Huh? There's a button here."

"Do not mess with it anymore, you fool!! What am I supposed to do if they wrap all around me and start to vibrate!? Dammit, this is the problem with fantasy settings!!"

The boy was not listening at all, so he pressed the button. The familiar voice of a certain dwarf came from the handle of the multi-tool knife.

"Well, you see… It's our style to add on a little something extra if we have some excess materials, but I was having trouble figuring out what to do for this one. I can't exactly give someone like you a hammer that can smash anyone's head."

"H-how does that lead to making these tentacles?" protested Waltraute.

"But then I had an idea. You wanted a tool to remove a Valkyrie's armor. But the fun doesn't end with just stripping the girl. You didn't look like you were used to handling a woman, so I thought it would be best to add on something to help you out with that."

"…"

"This is a magic device that will automatically take a Valkyrie to heaven once it has been activated!! It doesn't matter how stubborn or frigid she is. By combining this with the tool to remove the armor, you are almost guaranteed to defeat any Valkyrie!! Gah hah hah! When I told the other dwarves about this, they all gathered together to give this their all! It might be too effective, so I wouldn't be surprised if the Valkyrie ended up passing out while foaming at the mouth!!"

"I think I want to try that tool out…" said Freyja with her eyes glittering, but her voice did not reach Midgard.

The water mill had contained a nice atmosphere not long before, but it had completely frozen over due to Waltraute's killer intent. (The boy felt left behind because he did not understand what any of it meant.) Waltraute stood up from the floor, swiped the golden tool from the boy's hand, and needlessly adjusted her armor that had not yet been removed.

With a Spear of Destroying Lightning glowing bluish-white in her right hand, she gave a quick instruction to the confused boy.

"…Wait here a moment."

And…

The wrath of the gods rained down on the underground world of Niðavellir.

Chapter 3: The Difference between the Gods and the Giants is an Incredibly Unfair One

Part 1

On a certain day of a certain month, the boy and Waltraute had a fight.

It happened during one of their dates. As usual, this date came about from a challenge made by the boy to the (supposedly) reluctant Waltraute. He had challenged her to a fishing competition. The boy had only been able to catch boots and buckets, but when he puffed out his cheeks in frustration just before the time limit, he accidentally snagged the clothes of the goddess of the sea Rán and won the competition. (Incidentally, this meant Rán was half-naked when she was pulled up out of the water, so Waltraute had scolded him unfairly.)

As for the story behind the aforementioned fight…

"Waltraute, you sure are tall."

"Yes, having a decent height gives one an advantage in battle. That is why I was designed this way."

"I don't grow no matter what I eat. I wish my legs were as long as yours."

"Hyaahn!? D-do not start rubbing me there, you fool!"

But that was not the cause of the fight.

"It's so hot."

"Y-yes. The god of harvest Freyr may be putting in too much effort today."

"Don't you get hot always wearing that armor?"

"Once you are used to it, it is no big deal."

"Hmm. You don't have some trick making it cool inside your armor, do you?"

"Nwaaaaaahhhh!? Where do you think you are sticking your haaaaannnnnnd!?"

But that was not the cause of the fight.

“Yams!”

“Pant pant pant… Y-yes. But do not touch them if you do not intend to eat them. They will make you itchy.”

“Yams, yams.”

“…Okay, Norns, you goddesses of fate. This is not happening. I can take a guess from the previous two incidents that this will have some kind of lewd punch line. However, I have my doubts about whether it still counts as simply ‘lewd’ if things head to a more delicate area-
…gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

The three goddesses Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld who were usually completely expressionless started clapping their hands together and laughing, but this was not the cause of the fight either.

It all started with the white horse the Valkyrie always rode. When Waltraute arrived in the human world of Midgard, the boy had looked up at her and asked a question.

“I want to ride it too. Can I?”

“Mh.” Waltraute held the reins to control the white horse’s movements. “Unfortunately, I cannot allow that.”

Given the boy’s height, it would have been difficult for him to ride a normal horse. He might have been able to ride something like a pony, but it seemed impossible for him to manage such a large beast. It would obviously end up as something out of a rodeo.

And on top of that, Waltraute’s horse was no normal horse. It was also a device meant to ensure the special transportation method using Bifröst went smoothly. Bifröst would break her “existence” down, but intentionally adding in an impurity allowed her to move more quickly and more accurately. Other gods used Bifröst as well, but they were not able to travel at 87% the speed of light or land with a margin of error of only a few centimeters like a Valkyrie could.

That special white horse was not as simple to handle as a normal one. There was no way she could hand that boy of the human world the reins of a rough horse that was known to easily throw off your average god.

But it seemed the boy did not understand any of that.

“Why not? Why not? I wanna ride it! I wanna ride it!!”

“Sigh. This horse is almost 2 meters tall. Can you even climb up onto it?”

The Valkyrie denied him gently.

“Uuh…uuh…”

But the boy suddenly began rummaging through the bag on his back.

“Carrot.”

And the white horse immediately knelt down.

Waltraute gritted her teeth and said, “Kh, so you’re just a beast!!”

“Climb!!”

As the boy tried to grab on to the horse, the Valkyrie grabbed his upper body with both hands and placed him right in front of her.

Looking dissatisfied, the boy said, “…No. You can’t be supporting me from behind. I have to hold the reins on my own.”

“Why are you so insistent about this? If you want go somewhere, I can bring you anywhere within the human world.”

“The whole point is to control it myself!!”

“Well, unfortunately, I cannot allow that.”

That was Waltraute’s honest response after considering the fundamental difference in physical ability between a human and a Valkyrie, but the boy’s cheeks visibly puffed up.

“I can do it!! Even if I can’t do it right now, I’ll train a whole bunch and then do it.”

“No, the problem is at a deeper level than that.”

“I can do it!!”

“This is the same as having a race between a human and a leopard. It is not something worth putting any effort into.”

“I can-…”

“I will help you with everything a human cannot do. I do not know if a human can help me with anything I cannot do, but I am not so narrow-minded as to ask for an equivalent exchange.”

“Uuh…Uuuhh…!!”

“Hm?”

Waltraute realized something was odd.

The boy held between her arms was shaking. She tried to look at his face, but before she could, the boy raised his head and shouted out.

“Shut up, you idiot!! If I work hard…If I work hard, I can get strong!! Wahhh!!”

“Wait… Wh-why are you crying!?”

“Byahhh!!”

The boy slipped from Waltraute’s arms and half-jumped down from the white horse. He ran off with his arms up in the air and Xs in his eyes.

Waltraute was completely dumbfounded.

“…What was that?” she muttered.

Her white horse twisted its thick neck to look at its master.

Its round eyes seemed to say, “This is bad. Humans have many ways of crying, but ‘byahhh’ is bad.”

Part 2

“Yeah, ‘byahhh’ is definitely bad,” said the 9th Valkyrie sister Rossweisse once Waltraute returned to the heavenly world of Asgard.

Waltraute was the 4th sister.

Even though she was the youngest of the nine Valkyrie sisters, Rossweisse was a 170 cm tall iron wall of a cool beauty (although she had a completely flat chest). The Valkyrie system naturally selected for those who had an affinity with both the gods and humans, but in this age, there were likely plenty of people in the human world of Midgard that would want her to look down on them and verbally abuse them.

Bifröst’s 3rd runway had been completely transformed into a gathering point for the gods and more Valkyries were there in addition to those two. They were sitting directly on the runway and speaking about something. Perhaps it was due to their constant trips to battlefields, but they showed no particular resistance towards sitting in an area void of high-class chairs or tables.

“B-but… I cannot understand why the boy would grow so emotional over that. I suppose humans are not as simple as they might seem. But as I went on that date as his reward for winning a competition, I cannot allow it to end on such a poor note.”

“You probably hurt his pride,” said the 2nd sister Gerhilde without giving it much thought.

She was the intellectual strategist type and she was never seen without her glasses. She brushed her fingers across their frame as she spoke.

“The men of Midgard use bravery as a barometer for how virtuous they are. Lord Odin taught them to be that way. That boy is exceedingly mistaken if he is viewing a Valkyrie the same as a human, but he may feel ashamed to be constantly protected by a woman.”

“Hm.”

“What do you think, Sister Brynhildr?”

The 9th sister Rossweisse turned the conversation toward the eldest sister Brynhildr, but her expression showed no particular change. She merely moved her eye slightly to look at the 4th sister Waltraute.

“…Sorry, but I doubt I could give you a decent answer on this topic,” she said in an emotionless voice. “My relationship with the human Siegfried came to a ruinous end. Not only would advice from one who failed be of no use, but it could also further confuse your decision.”

“Chehh…”

The 9th sister Rossweisse seemed more dissatisfied with the lack of an answer than the subtly of lack of emotions.

The second sister Gerhilde looked toward the end of the runway and said, “Any answer received based on conjecture is nothing but a delusion. As you can always gather more information, would it not be better to simply gather more if you do not know the answer?”

“Perhaps. Let’s see…”

The 4th sister Waltraute peered over the edge of the 3rd runway and into the human world of Midgard.

She spotted the boy swinging a wooden stick around in front of his small house.

“Whoosh, whoosh!!”

“…What is he trying to do?”

Waltraute was relieved to find he no longer seemed upset, but she also frowned. The boy’s parents who were smoking some bacon in the yard must have felt the same because they called out a question to their son who had suddenly started acting this way.

The boy replied, “Well, I had a fight with a friend today.”

“I am not a friend!! You are the one that asked to have me as your wife!”

“Waltraute, should I take how super, super, super quickly you reacted to mean that was quite a shock to you?”

“That information is related to the rules and result of our competition. I cannot have it treated so ambiguously!!”

“Yes, yes. Well, this friend is really strong, always has their back straight, and is never afraid of anything.” As the boy spoke, he continued to swing the stick around. “But I doubt this friend will allllways be strong. They might catch a cold or get injured.”

“…”

That would never be an issue for the residents of Asgard who ate tons of the immortality apples grown by the goddess Iðunn, but Waltraute remained silent.

“So if this friend is ever in trouble and can’t use their normal strength, I want to have the strength to support them. I can’t always be protected by this friend. I want to be strong too. Once I’m strong, I can support Waltraute too. We may have been born in different places and have different levels of talent or whatever, but that doesn’t matter. But…”

The boy trailed off.

An unpleasant sweat began to flow from Waltraute's body.

What idiot had it been telling him it was impossible and that it was not worth working at?

The boy in Midgard then raised his head and spoke with a weak smile on his face.

"But I'm going to try even if it's impossible! Even if I don't get perfect results right away, maybe I can be useful in some other way. I hope I can help Waltraute in some way."

As the representative of the other nine Valkyrie sisters who had heard that from the 3rd runway, the 2nd sister Gerhilde asked a quick question.

"Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorryyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!" cried Waltraute while on her knees and bowing down.

At times like this, the 4th sister Waltraute could get rather athletic-minded.

Part 3

Waltraute tried to head straight for the boy's house, but the other 8 Valkyries held her back. It could be easy to forget, but her job was to gather the souls of the most excellent war dead in preparation for the final battle of Ragnarök. If she forced her way into that house in the human world of Midgard, the parents could very well be afraid their son was going to die soon.

And so Waltraute sent the two ravens Muninn and Huginn instead.

But they had their complaints.

"Y'know, you seem to have forgotten…"

"But we're actually Lord Odin's private scouts."

But despite their complaints, they frantically flew off once multiple Valkyries glared at them. It seemed the ravens needed to go ahead and admit to being an errand-runner for the entirety of the heavenly world.

The ravens arrived in Midgard and peered in through the window to the boy's room, but…

"Hm? The boy isn't here."

"What?" said Waltraute as she looked down into Midgard from the 3rd runway.

It was late at night. Even a Valkyrie who was unfamiliar with the customs of the human world knew a boy of his age should not be out that late.

"Where did he go?"

"There's some kind of map in his room."

"The writing is really bad, but I think it says 'training journey'."

When Waltraute heard that, she really did hold her head in her hands. With this, there was no way she could face his parents.

"Where did that boy go!? From our previous experiences, I doubt he will stay within Midgard!!"

That boy had already attempted to head to two different worlds out of the nine worlds that branched off of the world tree. That was rare enough for anyone in Midgard, but that boy had done it completely unarmed. It would not be surprising if he had some insane idea such as heading to the giant world of Jötunheimr in order to drink the water gushing from the spring of wisdom.

But the information Muninn and Huginn provided went beyond Waltraute's expectations.

“Well, if what this map says is accurate…”

“It looks like he intends to explore the fire world of Muspelheim.”

“That is the enemy’s headquarters ruled by the evil Surtr!!” exclaimed Waltraute. “Why is that boy once again heading towards an area with a danger level of red!?”

When the final battle of Ragnarök happened, it was said a large number of evil spirits and giants would be dragged from that world using the giant ship Naglfar that was made from the nails of the dead. It was the most evil of all places. And Surtr, the one who ruled at the top of all that evil, would burn away all nine worlds with his burning sword.

“Hmm. If a human tries to learn the fighting techniques and magic of Asgard, it takes decades. He may be trying to take a shortcut by using a different system,” suggested one of the ravens.

“You fool. They would never simply teach him their techniques or magic! They would only deceive him and devour his soul!! Dammit. Did my foolish comment drive the boy this far!?”

As Odin and the rest of the Æsir would not grant people’s wishes so easily, it was not uncommon for sorcerers to worship Surtr or Hel, the queen of the underworld, who possessed power using a different system.

But a Valkyrie like Waltraute knew well what fate awaited those who took such shortcuts. Some had their souls taken by the queen of the underworld and some had even their souls destroyed by a Valkyrie. Either way, there was no hope for them.

She hurriedly mounted her white horse and requested permission to use the 3rd runway.

“…Tch. Too much data traffic. I can’t activate Bifröst right away.”

She glared at Heimdallr the watchman, but the timid controller merely shook his head.

She looked into the sky beyond the end of the 3rd runway and opened her eyes wide.

She looked across the entirety of the human world of Midgard.

“…There he is. He is only moving on foot, so he has not made it out of Midgard yet. I can still have him turn back. No dark shadow will grab ahold of his soul!!”

“What should we do?” asked the ravens.

“Due to the data traffic, it will be 20 or 30 minutes before Bifröst can activate. You should be able to reach him quicker. Contact that boy and inform him of the danger. Use your words to stop him before I arrive!!”

“Understood.”

As she listened to Muninn and Huginn's words, Waltraute concentrated while sitting atop her white horse. Many magical processes were being executed at high speed, but she could not stand how the surrounding devices with poor data transfer speeds could not keep up.

"There he is. We found the boy," reported one of the ravens.

"Hey! Wait up, wait up!!"

(Okay!!)

The boy looked surprised at Muninn and Huginn's sudden appearance.

"It's Huginn and Muninn," he said.

"Yes, it's Muninn and Huginn."

"Were you forced to run over and give me a message again?"

"Did you have to remember that part!?" The two ravens flew around the boy. "Please do not go to the fire world of Muspelheim! That is not as safe a place as you think it is!!"

"If it isn't dangerous, I can't train there."

"Good point, but we are saying its difficulty level is too high for you to level up!! While not everyone there is a great demon king, it is something like an island filled with small demon kings. You cannot gain experience points there!! You'll just get your ass kicked!!"

"You're only equipped with the Leather Clothes and the Wooden Stick! A beginner is supposed to train by wandering around just outside the city and heading back to the inn when your health is down too far! You have to gather money, gather equipment, search for party members, and all sorts of other things before heading there!"

"???"

Either because they had used too much jargon or because they had not planned out their argument, the boy did not quite understand.

Muninn and Huginn continued squawking.

"And didn't your parents teach you that that the evil spirits and giants of Muspelheim will never open their hearts to a human? Why would you go somewhere that dangerous?"

"Well…" The boy swung his wooden stick around. "I want to train on my own in the same place as the people of Muspelheim."

"What?"

“Setting aside the fact that there are no ‘people’ in Muspelheim, what do you mean by that?”

“Our human world is protected by the gods and Waltraute, right? That would be the same as having her control the horse for me. To really get strong, I have to work hard on my own!”

“…Mh. So that’s it,” muttered Waltraute as she held the reins of her white horse and frowned.

It was true that using that method could allow a human soul to contact the residents of the fire world of Muspelheim and gain skills and magic while avoiding being tainted.

If one was doing the exact same things but changing their location, there would be no problem.

The Valkyrie had a feeling that working outside of the protection of the gods would only lower his speed of growth, but she was relieved that he was not thinking of borrowing the power of the ruler of the fire world or the queen of the underworld.

“In that case, he should have asked me to teach him!! No, no, wait. I was the one that pushed him away by telling him it was impossible.”

Waltraute’s mood sank into self-condemnation.

The cause of it all really was her.

At any rate, the situation could be summed up in the following: that boy of Midgard was heading for Muspelheim. However, he was not seeking the evil skills and magic of the evil spirits and giants. He simply wanted an environment to train under his own power that was outside of the protection of the gods.

If that was all, he was not taking a shortcut or heading down the path of heresy.

The end result was perfectly acceptable, so there was no pressing need for her to stop him using the authority of a Valkyrie.

However…

“The question is whether the residents of Muspelheim will accept the boy or not. The odds of that are extremely low. Is dragging him back the only way to protect the boy?”

Waltraute was a bit unwilling to do so since it was her overprotectiveness that brought about the situation in the first place, but she had no choice here.

The Valkyrie began thinking about seeing him safely back to his house and then introducing him to a training menu a human could manage.

As she thought, the voices of the boy and the two ravens reached her ears.

“But it is true that Muspelheim is a dangerous place,” said one of the ravens. “How about you use the knowledge of the Æsir as a shortcut? We can give you that knowledge. There is no need to be reckless. Lord Odin ordered us to gather information from all across the heavenly world, so we have plenty we could teach you.”

“Actually, do you think Waltraute wanted to play the role of the sexy tutor?” added the other raven.

“Hey, wait!!” shouted Waltraute. “Do not make up nonsense, you fool!!”

“Um,” said the boy. “I want you to keep this a secret from Waltraute. I don’t want to worry her.”

“I am already incredibly worried, you fool!!”

Waltraute decided anew to drag that boy back, but then…

“And this is a manly training journey. Mr. Nebby from my neighborhood said men go on journeys to get stronger!”

“No! That was just a free spirit trying to show off!!” complained Waltraute.

“I’m going on a manly training journey! And once I get strong, Waltraute will praise me a whole bunch!! So keep this a secret!!”

“……Uuh.”

When Waltraute heard him talk like he was secretly preparing a birthday present, she let out a groan as the departure process for the 3rd runway continued.

For his safety, she needed to head out and take him back immediately.

But if she did that, the boy’s touching plan would be ruined.

The battle-obsessed Waltraute did not hate that kind of effort taken to obtain strength.

Training was a battle against oneself.

One who continued working while brushing aside all temptation and setbacks would win definite blessings. She felt a just beauty in that fact.

And she also knew exactly how rude it was for a third party to smash that gathered beauty.

And so…

While swearing silently that it was for purely official reasons and not because she had been shaken by him imagining the praises he would receive from her, she spoke.

“I-I can’t stop him,” Waltraute finally muttered. “I can’t believe this! I can’t stop that boy now!!”

Part 4

Despite what she said, Waltraute took off from the Bifröst runway and descended to the human world of Midgard while creating an unnatural aurora in the night sky. After she had dismounted from the white horse, it disappeared into the light once more.

However, she was not near the boy.

While maintaining a distance at which a human could not see her but a Valkyrie could see him, Waltraute opened her eyes wide and stared intently at the boy.

“Um,” started Muninn and Huginn upon meeting up with Waltraute. “Why don’t you head back to Asgard? You can watch him easily enough from there.”

“You fool. I need to be able to head out immediately if something happens. Bifröst cannot be used around the fire world of Muspelheim or the underworld of Niflheim because the flow of magical power is so strange there. I can be more certain from here.”

“If you’re that worried, you should have just landed right in front of the boy.”

“She’s probably too embarrassed because they haven’t made up after their fight ye-…bgyahhh!?”

Seeing Huginn about to be crushed within a fist, Muninn began trembling and changed the subject.

“W-well… A human boy approaching Muspelheim is one thing, but won’t they prepare for war if a top-class Valkyrie approaches their headquarters?”

“Mh. I can cut through them to retrieve that boy if need be.”

“Is this really okay?” muttered the two ravens doubtfully.

The fire world of Muspelheim was the primary enemy force for the heavenly world of Asgard.

Not even a top-class Valkyrie could take that world on alone. If she could, Muspelheim would have been destroyed long ago.

That was how dangerous this foe was, but Waltraute said, “If this progresses as is, I do not see there being much of a risk. Of course, I need to be prepared for unexpected circumstances.”

“?”

“The odds are very low that the boy will ever make it to Muspelheim,” said Waltraute simply. “It is an island at the farthest end of the ocean. One does not simply walk there. Nor does one sail there on a hastily constructed boat. In fact, the completion of the giant ship Naglfar is one of the

signs of Ragnarök because it allows them to cross that vast ocean. I doubt that boy can accomplish something the entire force of Muspelheim might not be able to manage."

If one could fly through the air, it was possible, but they all knew that boy possessed no such magic power.

Some of the evil spirits borrowed from Niflheim to help prepare that ship in Muspelheim would ignore gravity and cross that ocean to do damage to Midgard.

However, that was a sporadic occurrence. Even a Valkyrie would be in danger if an army of giants and evil spirits attacked, but she could deal with a small number of evil spirits before they could attack the boy.

And so…

"That boy will arrive at the shore, but that it as far as he will get. Even that is crossing the boundaries of Midgard, so it is still a great adventure to another world. The boy will give up at the shore. If I tell him his journey has made him strong once he returns, all of this will be over."

"I suppose the boy's legs will at least be stronger."

"Y-yes. I cannot deny that. He has already tried to travel to three different worlds after all," admitted the beautiful Valkyrie who was the boy's driving force.

At any rate, it seemed all the loose ends would be tied up.

The fire world of Muspelheim was a dangerous place, but the boy would face no real risk if he never actually arrived there.

But something happened Waltraute did not expect.

"Oh, Mr. Loki. What are you doing here?"

"Oh, what a coincidence. Fancy meeting you here."

"!? All of a sudden, I sense a storm approaching!!" shouted Waltraute.

"That's the joker of the Æsir for you," commented one of the ravens.

"I have business in Muspelheim. Are you heading out for a swim in the ocean, boy?"

"What a coincidence. I'm headed to Muspelheim, too."

"No, wait. He does not have Naglfar!!" argued the Valkyrie. "Loki himself may be able to transform, but he cannot create enough lift to carry that boy even if he turns into a hawk!!"

But Loki continued, “Then how about I give you a lift? I happen to have a feather of Icarus, so just grab on to me.”

“Icarus!!” shouted the boy excitedly.

Waltraute was about ready to smash everything within reach.

“That evil god really is a joker!!”

“And he just introduced something from Greek mythology. But you’ve already crossed over to other settings when you mentioned gyms and used the metric system, so I suppose this didn’t come from nowhere.”

“But if this world has wings even a human can pilot, doesn’t the initial challenge to climb the world tree under his own power lose all meaning? And it doesn’t even require relying on Greek things. Wayland created very similar wings, so-…gygygygyaahh!? D-don’t…don’t strangle me like that!”

“How dare you spit on the results of a strict competition a human risked his life on. It seems ravens need to be taught manners before they are taught to speak.”

More importantly, the boy was about to accept Loki’s invitation and head to the fire world of Muspelheim. The level of danger was very, very different between turning back at the beach and actually entering the fire world.

“I really am going to kill that evil god this time. Come to think of it, if we just kill him instead of the giants and evil spirits, wouldn’t that prevent Ragnarök from happening!?”

Waltraute held a Spear of Destroying Lightning tightly in her right hand.

“No, wait. If you attack Loki now, won’t the boy be caught in the blast?”

“Uuh…!!”

“And it seems Loki knows it. He’s smirking in this direction.”

“Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

Waltraute fired Spears of Destroying Lightning indiscriminately into the night sky and very nearly hit the wolf that was constantly chasing after the moon.

Carelessly approaching Muspelheim could easily cause them to prepare for war.

The Valkyrie gritted her teeth and muttered to herself.

“(But if need be, I will bring that boy back even if it starts a war. Yes. I cannot use Bifröst near Muspelheim, but I can always split the sea with a Spear of Destroying Lightning. I have to take responsibility for leaving that boy alone.)”

“This idiot in love is thinking something crazy while trying to pass it off as her battle obsession!!”

Part 5

Surtr, the ruler of the fire world of Muspelheim, had accurately captured the locations of Loki and the boy as they approached (as well as the location of the Valkyrie emitting a fearsome light from her eyes).

Whether it was due to being a giant or due to being an evil ruler, Surtr was large.

For one thing, he was over 4 meters tall. He also held enough energy within him to activate a magic sword with destructive power on a great enough scale to burn down the world tree.

When Loki landed on the ground, he was surrounded by an army of the Muspell giants who resided in the fire world and an army of the evil spirits dispatched from the underworld of Niflheim. However, Loki merely casually raised both hands with a thin smile.

Surtr said, "What are you here for? Surely you know what this place is."

"My side may have changed when I became brother-in-law with Odin, but I originally had giant blood flowing through my veins."

"Blood of the giant world of Jötunheimr. You have no connection to Muspelheim."

"Are there a lot of different kinds of giants?" asked the boy innocently.

Still smiling, Loki answered, "The neighboring Vanir were originally considered a type of giant rather than a type of god. They are a lovely example of how race does not determine whether you are good or evil."

"Oh…"

"Normally, giants are 3 to 5 meters tall. But when the Vanir became gods, some adjustments were made so they would be the same size as you humans. Even the goddess Freyja who is known for being the most beautiful in all of Norse mythology originally came from the Vanir. In other words, she has giant blood."

"So there really are all sorts of giants," said the boy with his eyes sparkling.

However, Surtr was not going to remain silent.

The Æsir had unilaterally decided the residents of Muspelheim were giants who had headed down the path of evil for some reason other than their race, so that should not have been surprising.

Plus, Loki had been purposefully choosing his words in order to apply damage to Surtr while using the boy's innocence as a cushion.

And the boy was completely unaware it was happening.

"What is that?" asked the boy while pointing to the army of evil spirits surrounding them.

Despite how ridiculous an idea it was, it was possible he thought they were there to welcome Loki and him.

"They are evil spirits who have allied with Muspelheim's forces," answered Loki.

It may have seemed odd for evil spirits to be the enemies of the gods, but the gods used the war dead of the Einherjar as their own soldiers. They were the spirit soldiers on the evil side, so they were known as evil spirits. The line drawn by the Æsir was very simple and quite unfair.

And the ones who commanded the Muspell giants and the evil spirits were Surtr, a giant, and Hel, the queen of the underworld who possessed giant blood. But just like the Vanir had originally been giants, Surtr and Hel both possessed the attributes of gods as well.

In other words…

The organization of the heavenly world of Asgard and the fire world of Muspelheim were actually very similar. The primary difference was the location itself.

If Muspelheim controlled the world, they would be the ones known as gods.

"…Oh, so they're evil spirits," muttered the boy with his eyes wide.

However, he did not grow terrified or try to run away from those "repulsive things" like other humans would.

For some reason, he pulled some snacks from the bag on his back, placed them on a makeshift plate he had made from a large leaf, and held them out towards the evil spirits.

It was like he was giving an offering.

And then the boy held his hands together and spoke.

"N-Namu…"

The army of evil spirits very nearly ceased to be evil.

“H-hey!! You are the ultimate army filled with hatred for the final battle of Ragnarök! Why are you all getting that cheerful look!? And the Namu Amida Butsu is from a completely different setting!!” frantically shouted out Surtr as he very nearly suffered a severe loss of military strength.

“Hah hah hah.” Loki’s smile was as pure as that of the (formerly) evil spirits. “It looks like all that chatting we did midflight paid off. But not even I expected it to go this far.”

“Loki, you joker! What the hell are you here for!? Are you here to attack Muspelheim as one of the Æsir!?”

“I am both an Æsir and a giant. To be blunt, I have no interest in that kind of division.” Loki grinned. “I am the one who almost destroyed the Æsir by kidnapping Iðunn so that they lost the method of producing apples of immortality. And I fathered the greatest foes of Asgard: the great wolf Fenrir, the great serpent Jörmungandr, and the queen of the underworld Hel. …Doesn’t it seem that you owe me more than I owe you?”

“Mhh…”

Surtr’s anger was cooled.

“So why are you here?”

“My objective was complete from the moment I set foot on this land.”

“What?”

“Also…I know.” Loki ignored Surtr’s confusion and placed his hand on the head of the boy next to him. “While we’re here, how about you grant this boy’s wish?”

Part 6

Waltraute was monitoring the boy from a point just barely beyond Muspelheim’s defensive line.

When she heard that conversation, she muttered, “Hm. I doubt Loki would act so kind without reason. What is he after? …Don’t tell me he really does have an interest in other men.”

The two ravens Muninn and Huginn spoke while flying around next to Waltraute.

“Hm? That is…”

“Waahhh!! Lady Waltraute, look…look over there a second!!”

“Silence. Do not speak to me during this important moment.”

“No, this is more important!! I don’t know why, but the no-view zone in Muspelheim has been unlocked!” squawked one of the ravens. “That’s Naglfar!! That’s the giant ship Naglfar!!”

“…What?”

She was reluctant to take her eyes off of the boy, but Waltraute frowned and glanced over in the direction Muninn and Huginn indicated.

And she was left utterly speechless.

A number of large white ships were lined up along a dock on the shore of Muspelheim. They were not floating in the water. Instead, they were lined up along the flat ground and supported by many wooden pillars.

They must have been under construction.

They were the giant ships known as Naglfar. During the final battle of Ragnarök, they would carry countless evil spirits and giants to attack the human world of Midgard and the heavenly world of Asgard.

Technically, they were likely not simple ships but actually something like a mobile version of Bifröst.

Around the fire world of Muspelheim and the underworld of Niflheim, the odd flow of magical power prevented the use of Bifröst. That was one of the defensive lines set up by the giants to prevent a surprise attack from the Æsir, but it also made it difficult for the giants to use similar transportation techniques.

That was why they needed Naglfar.

Once Naglfar achieved enough distance from Muspelheim that it was outside the range of that defensive area they had set up themselves, the giants and evil spirits on the ships could be scattered throughout the nine worlds. That was how “the battle that would end the world” would spread throughout all the worlds in no time at all.

The completion of Naglfar was one of the triggers for Ragnarök.

In other words, a general time limit for Ragnarök could be calculated by the construction rate of Naglfar.

“…What was it the head of wisdom Mímir had predicted?” asked Waltraute.

“I-I think it was that the danger would likely come 300 years from now…”

“That fool!! It is over 90% complete! From the looks of it, they might be able to finish it within a week!!”

But then Waltraute received a communication in her ear.

It was from the second Valkyrie sister Gerhilde.

“We have received a report via Muninn and Huginn of what you are seeing. Waltraute, please return to Asgard.”

“What are you going to do!?”

“As the timing of Ragnarök has been accelerated, we must also prepare for war. We must begin immediately. The difference lies in whose preparations are completed first.”

“B-but…!!”

The fourth sister Waltraute looked over towards the fire world of Muspelheim.

The boy was still there.

If Ragnarök began now and the gods and the giants clashed, the boy would most certainly be caught in the middle of it all. And a soul born in the human world of Midgard was not durable enough to withstand the attacks of the gods.

Even his soul would be destroyed.

Waltraute would not even be able to retrieve him as a member of the Einherjar.

And the second sister Gerhilde was likely already aware of that danger thanks to Muninn and Huginn.

Despite that knowledge, she said, “We have always known that over 99% of the residents of Midgard will die once Ragnarök begins. The stage where you could remain attached to that boy has ended. You must change your line of thinking and prepare for Ragnarök.”

“…!!”

The creaking sound of something straining could be heard inside Waltraute’s fist. She very nearly crushed the part of her aurora armor that covered her hand.

“The information we have received from you has been very useful,” continued Gerhilde. “We can use that information to strike first against Muspelheim in a preemptive surprise attack. I will see you at the strategic control room in Valhalla.”

The transmission ended.

The two ravens cowered in fear of the killer intent coming from Waltraute, but remaining silent would not help matters.

One of the ravens hesitantly said, “But if Ragnarök has started, there really isn’t anything you can do for the human boy.”

“In fact, isn’t a good thing we managed to catch a glimpse of Naglfar? It would have been completed sooner or later even if this had not happened. If we hadn’t noticed, Midgard and Asgard would have been caught off guard.”

“…A good thing?” said Waltraute in a low voice as if it was a curse. She finally began shouting with clear hatred in her voice. “Damn you, Loki… Damn you, Loki!! You brought that boy to Muspelheim because you knew this would happen, didn’t you!? You lured in Muninn and Huginn, the scouts of the heavenly world, so they would see how far Naglfar had progressed!!”

Due to the distorted flow of magical power, Bifröst could not be used to reach Muspelheim. That distortion also interfered with Asgard’s other magic, and some of the most distorted areas could not even be seen with their magically-enhanced vision.

Surtr had hidden Naglfar’s construction in one of those areas to prevent anyone from observing its rate of completion. That was why Asgard based their decisions on the prediction made by the head of wisdom Mímir.

So why had Waltraute and the ravens “coincidentally” learned how far along Naglfar was?

The answer was simple: it was no coincidence.

“Loki forcibly opened the no-view zone from within Muspelheim! His goal was to let us see Naglfar just as it became dangerously close to completion!! And he got a soul of the human world involved to do it!!”

“But…” The ravens looked over at the boy who was asking about various things within the fire world of Muspelheim. “Wasn’t that the right thing to do as a member of the Æsir? Even if he got us involved, Loki was working to reveal the plans of Muspelheim.”

“Not a chance,” denied Waltraute immediately. “What is Naglfar made out of?”

“Well…”

“What is it made out of!?”

“Th-the fingernails and toenails of dead humans!!”

“Yes. The more humans die, the faster Naglfar approaches completion. Times of peace delay its completion. So you’re saying Loki predicted how far along Naglfar’s construction was? Of course he did. He is the one who has been causing volcanic eruptions and wars in Midgard to hasten its completion!!”

He was merely showing off the destruction he had prepared.

It was a mocking plan befitting of that joker.

But the end result would be the demise of all nine worlds. And that would of course include that innocent boy.

“B-but why!? Why is Loki doing this!?”

“…I cannot even guess,” replied Waltraute in a low voice.

The target of her hatred stood next to the boy she wished to protect. And the armies of Muspelheim stood in the way of her path to either.

Part 7

“Looks like it’s begun,” muttered Loki to himself so Surtr could not hear as the giant barked orders at his subordinate giants and evil spirits in one corner of the fire world of Muspelheim.

The boy next to Loki did not seem to understand the situation as he looked around at the objects and scenery he could never see in the human world of Midgard.

“What has begun?”

“The final battle of Ragnarök.”

Even that boy’s expression stiffened when he heard that. It seemed even a human of his age had been taught about Ragnarök from his parents or a shaman.

That meant the end of the nine worlds supported by the world tree Yggdrasil.

It was the final battle that would burn everything away.

“Y-you’re kidding.”

“Why would I be kidding?”

“But…you have to be kidding!! The old shaman would always laugh and say Ragnarök is something a long, long time from now!!”

“The gods have more accurate information than humans. And look. You can see Naglfar being completed, right? Surly you have heard the stories. It is very nearly complete. At this rate, it will not even take a week.”

“…”

The boy looked like he was about to cry.

The only reason he was able to resist obeying his feelings and letting out a wail was because he had come here on a journey to grow stronger.

“Really?” asked the boy with his voice hoarse. “The final battle of Ragnarök really is beginning?”

Loki used some magic on the boy. This level of magic was usable even in Muspelheim.

The boy could now hear the communications and transmissions currently being sent throughout the heavenly world of Asgard.

“If we can get in a preemptive surprise attack now, we can substantially wear down Muspelheim’s forces!! This is our only time to attack!”

“No, we can’t. This is too little time to prepare. We do not have enough Einherjar war dead yet! We need to focus on fortifying our defenses instead of attacking!!”

“Even if the preemptive surprise attack is a success, a counterattack from Surtr could burn away 40% of Midgard.”

“That does not matter. Once Ragnarök begins, the predictions say over 99% of them will die anyway. Protecting Asgard takes priority!! Once Naglfar is complete, they will head directly here!”

To the powerless human boy, those words were much too cruel.

“This is to be expected,” said Loki with an unconcerned expression. “Asgard is operating under the assumption that the battle will occur, so their plans have already eliminated the possibility of stopping the battle. Even if nothing happens now, they will still be left waiting for Ragnarök to eventually happen.”

“Why did you come here, Mr. Loki?”

“To cause some disturbance in that assumption that it will happen sooner or later.”

As he replied, Loki dismantled the wings of Icarus by melting the wax holding the feathers together and pulled something out from within them.

It was a sword contained within a scabbard colored a sinister black and red.

“This sword is Dáinsleif. It is one of the highest ranked magical swords that even humans can wield.”

Once that magic sword was removed from its scabbard, it would never return to its scabbard until the hated opponent had been killed. Either the target would be killed or the wielder would lose his own life. This “sword of endings” would inevitably bring about one or the other result.

The average human could easily have their heart destroyed by the overflowing curse even if they pulled it just a crack from the scabbard.

It was a sword of mutual destruction.

That cruel weapon was most useful when an extreme gap existed between the value of the killer’s life and value the killed’s life.

“Are you going to fight that Surtr guy with this?”

“That is but one of many options. Success would be difficult, though,” readily admitted Loki. “After all, Surtr possesses a magic sword of his own that can set fire to the world tree Yggdrasil

and burn away all nine worlds. He has the more powerful sword and his strength is much greater than average. I doubt I could win in a direct fight."

Then what was he hoping to do?

Loki smiled thinly when he saw the look of confusion in the boy's eyes.

"Have you heard of the god named Höðr?"

"?"

"Ha ha. I suppose he would not be well known in Midgard. His body was weak and he was blind. Unlike a harvest god or a war god, his role was not one to have a large impact in human history."

"What happened to this god named Höðr?"

"He was famous for a certain spear. Specifically, a throwing spear made of mistletoe that was too young. A rule existed stating that nothing could harm the light god Baldr, but this mistletoe was exempted from the rule because it was too young. And Höðr did a brilliant job of killing Baldr using a throwing spear made of that mistletoe that no one saw any danger in."

Loki failed to mention that it had actually been Loki himself that had given Höðr that mistletoe and that Höðr had only obeyed Loki's instructions to throw it as a joke because he had not known it would kill his elder brother Baldr.

"There is always a blind spot. If you can take advantage of it, you can even kill the light god who supposedly could not be killed. And the gods and giants are essentially the same. There is a good chance Surtr has a blind spot like that."

A blind spot.

A means of fighting that did not involve using sword against sword.

An alternate method that parted ways with the standard functionality and the standard usage.

"I think Dáinsleif, the sword of mutual destruction, should be used, but I do not plan to draw it myself," said Loki. "I mean to have Surtr draw it. The sword of mutual destruction puts a curse on the killed and the killer. I cannot win a straight fight, but once Dáinsleif's curse has been applied evenly, Surtr is guaranteed to receive a certain level of damage as its user."

During the final battle of Ragnarök, several monsters such as the great serpent Jörmungandr, the great wolf Fenrir, and the queen of the underworld Hel would join together to oppose Asgard. However, the once who held the most important role was Surtr.

His sword would burn away the world tree and all nine worlds.

In other words, if he was defeated at an early stage of the battle, the ultimate conclusion would greatly change.

“But would Surtr really touch such a dangerous sword?”

“Normally, no. That is what the blind spot is for.”

Loki pulled another object out of the wax for the wings of Icarus.

It was a giant scabbard measuring over 3 meters and a giant sword grip that matched.

But the actual blade was missing.

Instead, the scabbard contained a hole the perfect size to fit Dáinsleif and the grip contained a hole the perfect size to fit Dáinsleif’s own grip.

“I can disguise Dáinsleif to look exactly like Surtr’s own magic flame sword. That way, Surtr will ‘accidentally’ draw Dáinsleif. No matter the method used, you will be cursed if you draw the magic sword. This will alter Ragnarök.”

Unlike an Æsir like Loki, the human boy or the giant Surtr would definitely be cursed if they drew the magic sword Dáinsleif. Even if the gods and the giants were said to be the same at the root, they directionality of their powers (what the Æsir called good and evil) was completely different.

While Surtr might be able to withstand the curse that leaked from the scabbard, even he would be unable to resist it if he completely drew the sword.

“But…” The boy hesitated. “Won’t Surtr be in trouble if you do that?”

“Unfortunately, the Norns have already predicted that Surtr will lose his life even if Ragnarök goes perfectly well. Whether this happens or not, his fate is the same,” said Loki smoothly. “But altering at which stage Surtr dies will greatly affect the lives of those living in the nine worlds. Over 99% of Midgard will die, so your mother and father are at risk. And over 80% of Asgard will die as well, so the odds aren’t good for Waltraute either. If I can greatly change those numbers, what do you think I should do?”

“…”

The boy looked down to the ground, fell silent, and bit his lip.

Finally, he spoke.

“How often do your ideas work?”

“You had to ask that, didn’t you?” Loki smiled. “My success rate is 30%...no, more like 20%. The odds are pretty high he’ll catch onto the truth by detecting the faint curse leaking from the crack in the altered scabbard. And even if he doesn’t, the magic flame sword symbolizes Surtr. I can’t say for sure whether he would mistake something else for the weapon that has adhered to his existence.”

At best, the odds were 30%.

If it succeeded, Surtr and the forces of Muspelheim he commanded would be thrown into chaos. Surtr was their greatest power, so Asgard would attack and smash Muspelheim to pieces if he was gone.

Was the boy willing to make that sacrifice in order to protect the human world of Midgard and the heavenly world of Asgard?

Or would he refuse to sacrifice and simply wait for the destruction of the nine worlds?

He thought.

And he made his decision.

“…Mr. Loki.”

“Yes?”

“Give me that sword. I have an idea.”

Part 8

“Muninn, Huginn.”

With a Spear of Destroying Lightning in her right hand, Waltraute called the two ravens that flew nearby.

She continued, “This is enough. You return to Asgard.”

“What will you do!?”

“You need not worry about that. If you stay, you will only get caught up in it all.

Muninn and Huginn could not question her any further.

This was because multiple Spears of Destroying Lightning flew towards Waltraute from many directions at once.

It was a total of seventeen.

That downpour of powerful light stabbed down from heaven to earth.

The air in the surrounding area shook. A brilliant flash of light filled one corner of the night and lit it up like midday.

A single Spear of Destroying Lightning created enough destructive power to destroy the average evil spirit if it so much as grazed them.

That violent dance of light filled a set area.

However…

"None of you can outmatch me in maneuverability, you fools," muttered Waltraute calmly.

Giant craters measuring kilometers in diameter were created everywhere, but the explosions were uneven. She moved at high speed to accurately evade through the small gaps between destruction.

An unnatural aurora covered the night sky.

The Valkyries who had fired the multiple Spears of Destroying Lightning from Asgard had descended at 87% the speed of light. The eight sisters on horseback had split into three groups to block Waltraute's escape. Despite their attacks missing, their expression remained unchanged. The attacks had only been intended to hold Waltraute in place as they landed. They never expected to defeat her with their initial attacks.

They had Waltraute surrounded in a 20 kilometer ring around her.

But for them, that might as well have been right next to each other.

After landing on the surface, they dismounted from their white horses and held their Spears of Destroying Lightning at the ready. The horses silently disappeared into the light, leaving only the Valkyries on the battlefield.

The Valkyries could move throughout the nine worlds at 87% the speed of light, but they did not like to appear right in front of their enemy to perform an immediate surprise attack.

The Bifröst method broke their existences down to transport them and then returned their existences to normal. In other words, one's senses could not grasp the situation for an instant after landing. If the target was already on guard, it was possible the target could get in a counter attack.

And…

The fourth sister Waltraute was the Valkyrie of the nine with the greatest maneuverability. She had the greatest odds of succeeding in such a counter attack.

A transmission from the third sister Ortlinde reached her ears.

"…Located. …Located. …Fourth sister Waltraute has been located. …She must be detached from the Wagner Valkyrie system to open a path to Muspelheim."

"So you are going to eliminate me without warning or negotiation?" asked Waltraute.

"Nothing we say will get you to move out of the way." This time it was the ninth sister Rossweisse. "After all, your beloved darling waits for you in Muspelheim. If we carry out a preemptive surprise attack, he is almost guaranteed to be caught in the middle of it."

"…"

Waltraute fell silent and the second sister Gerhilde pressed her further.

"Your actions could be seen as treason against heaven as they could assist Muspelheim and bring danger to Asgard. Asking you to move out of the way and obey our instructions was only for show. We could only obtain permission to eliminate you once you failed to heed our warning, so we do not care if you did not even listen. If a wooden placeholder is set in the seat of the missing fourth sister, the system can continue functioning."

"You may be superior when it comes to maneuverability," whispered the eldest sister Brynhildr to finish the conversation. "But we each have our own specialties. Surely you do not think you can outdo us in any category other than maneuverability."

For example…

The ninth sister Rossweisse had defensive power.

The much too large armor covering her slender body told it all. She sacrificed speed for that solid armor, but she could withstand several strikes from the Spears of Destroying Lightning fired by the other Valkyries.

The second sister Gerhilde had her great number of simultaneous attacks.

In both hands, she held the types of sticks used to control the strings of a marionette. She could use them to use 10 Spears of Destroying Lightning at once.

And then there was the eldest sister Brynhildr.

The aurora armor she wore flickered unnaturally. But with darkness, not light. A large bloody man floated up vaguely from within that dark flicker. The way his arms and legs hung down limply showed no sign of a human will. A single spear piercing through his back and out his chest furthered that impression. Several black strings wrapped around the spear and writhed about within the large man.

He was the legendary warrior Siegfried.

Brynhildr's specialty was her ability to control human souls. She could command and control the army of the Einherjar war dead more skillfully than anyone else.

"It is 8 to 1. As we are all Valkyries, numbers will decide this. Sorry, but we must defeat you," announced Brynhildr as the bloody Siegfried followed her around.

Siegfried was a soul from the human world, yet he was also a hero who had been made invincible except for the one spot on his back after bathing in dragon's blood. She could simultaneously control hundreds of thousands of souls on that level. In a pure contest of strength, Waltraute had no chance.

Part 9

What if?

What if the boy drew the magic sword Dáinsleif from its scabbard? Even if he challenged Surtr to a fight with that magic sword, the boy would not win.

After all, it would be a battle between one of the strongest swords a human can wield and one of the strongest of swords that a human would never be able to wield.

It was obvious which would be victorious.

What if?

What if the boy tried to approach Surtr with that dangerous sword in hand? Surtr might be so taken aback he would frantically try to take Dáinsleif from the ignorant boy. If the sword was loose in the scabbard, it might slip out.

Whatever the situation might be, the one who drew the sword from its scabbard would be cursed. It was possible Surtr would be cursed by Dáinsleif.

But Surtr was the ruler of the fire world of Muspelheim. He understood just how great a meaning was held in his own life and the choices he made.

If the boy approached with an object dangerous enough to possibly hinder him, he would likely cut the boy down no questions asked.

And after making the correct decision, he would regret it on his own without letting anyone else know.

What if?

What if the boy drew Dáinsleif of his own free will and then told Surtr he had been tricked by Loki? Dáinsleif could not be returned to its scabbard until either its target or its wielder had died. Would Surtr hesitate to strike and be struck by the boy's attack?

However, Surtr was a great ruler who had thoroughly trained himself and others for the sake of the coming battle. As he planned to literally rebel against the gods and sought victory despite knowing he could not overturn the predictions about Ragnarök, he had continued to strengthen his body and mind past their limits day after day.

Whatever the reason, he would cut down any human that stood before him while armed with a magic sword.

Surtr had thoroughly trained his thought processes for war, so that would be how he thought.

Even if he later regretted cutting down a powerless human, he would heartlessly act in the moment. That was simply the type of being Surtr was.

No matter what action he took and no matter what path he chose, the result would not change.

That was how most would view it and it was likely true.

But Loki was the one who had killed the light god Baldr who supposedly could not be killed no matter what. He knew from experience that those protected by an absolute always had the most vulnerable loopholes.

Even for Loki, this was a poor bet.

Replacing the magic flame sword that would burn down the nine worlds with Dáinsleif, the sword of mutual destruction, sounded simple enough, but it would be truly difficult to make Surtr mistake something else for the sword that was said to symbolize him.

And then the boy from Midgard made a suggestion.

After bringing him to Muspelheim to lure in Waltraute, Muninn, and Huginn so they would see Naglfar, that boy's role was supposed to have ended.

The boy gathered his determination and spoke.

He stood before the evil god Loki.

He stood before the magic sword Dáinsleif.

The path chosen by that tiny boy was…

Part 10

The other eight Valkyrie sisters closed in on the fourth sister Waltraute.

They had their Spears of Destroying Lightning, the army of Einherjar under their command, and the hero Siegfried controlled with both love and hatred by the eldest sister Brynhildr. They used all of that to advance on the traitor they deemed to be a real threat.

But Waltraute smiled.

“Simply getting into a fight to suit the situation is too boring. Let us bet a definite prize on the outcome.”

“A competition?” muttered Brynhildr as her tone of voice completely changed. “You dare enter into a competition with the Valkyries that oversee such things for the gods who rule over war!? Surely you know how reckless that is, Waltraute!!”

“I experienced it enough thanks to that boy from Midgard. I am painfully aware what a competition entails, Brynhildr,” said Waltraute quietly. “Let the competition begin. All eight of you can come at me at once if you wish. But once all eight of you have been rendered unable to fight, you must restrain from making any attacks that might involve that boy.”

“We planned to crush you regardless of any such promises…but you have a deal, Waltraute! However, I am only giving you this small hope so I can smash it to pieces!! You never had a chance of victory here!!”

“You are the ones with no chance of victory.”

“What?”

“You likely did so to quickly begin your bombardment from above and to stress adaptability and individual strength, but it was a mistake to create a force made up entirely of Valkyries. The outcome might have been different had you added in a pure god.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I am saying that victory is mine, you fool.”

Part 11

The boy walked through the fire world of Muspelheim.

He was searching for Surtr.

Loki's words were spinning around in his head. If Surtr was defeated, the result of Ragnarök might change. He might be able to protect his beloved Waltraute and others doomed to die.

The Muspell giants and evil spirits must have been busy preparing for war because they had been running every which way for a while. They did not have time to pay any attention to the boy's movements. Just like the spear Loki had once prepared, the boy was simply too young and powerless to pay any attention to.

But he was a human.

He had what it took to wield the magic sword Dáinsleif.

He could draw the magic sword as direct power or he could use it in a deception. The boy could make either choice.

(There he is. It's Surtr.)

The boy spoke silently to himself as he poked his head from behind a giant ship.

Surtr had his back to the boy as he gave orders along the beach lined with the ships of Naglfar. They were rushing to complete Naglfar for the final battle of Ragnarök.

"Sorry, but I don't have time to speak with you," said Surtr without even turning around. He used a gap between barking orders to speak to the boy. "Your idea to train in an area not protected by the gods was a good one, but you simply didn't have the time. …To be honest, I didn't expect to gather so many nails of the dead so quickly."

"…"

Surtr did not even look at the boy.

He must have been confident he could immediately take action if something happened. Then again, Surtr would not even be scratched if the boy swung a normal dagger up at him.

But what if the boy used Dáinsleif?

What if he used an alternative method to a frontal attack?

Was there really no hope of success?

Was it truly correct to think there was a chance?

“Surtr.”

The boy called his name.

The ruler still did not turn around.

The boy continued regardless.

“The thing is…”

Part 12

Eight Valkyries attacked at once to detach Waltraute from the system.

The Valkyries' Spears of Destroying Lightning allowed them to attack from dozens of kilometers away, but they could attack in quicker and quicker succession the closer they were. When a formation of eight was doing so from three different directions, even Waltraute's great maneuverability could not continue to evade every single attack.

And Waltraute would die if even a single strike hit her. The aurora armor was not enough to defend against a Spear of Destroying Lightning. The other Valkyries were treating this as a simple detachment procedure rather than a competition.

But…

That was only what would have happened if this was a pure fight between the gods in an action novel.

"Unfortunately for you, this is a love comedy. As reluctant as I am to admit it."

"What are you talking about!?"

Waltraute smiled quietly while paying no heed to the other eight charging towards her with their legs practically causing explosions along the ground and the tips of their Spears of Destroying Lightning flying towards her.

"I am saying that this competition will not be decided solely by such serious matters!!" shouted Waltraute as she released the Spear of Destroying Lightning she had been holding in her hand and reached a hand into her armor's pocket.

Inside that pocket was the tool she had confiscated from that boy in the previous chapter.

It was the multi-tool knife created by the dwarves.

It was a golden tool that would automatically remove a Valkyrie's armor.

"!?"

(Are you trying to remove our weapons and armor to prevent us from fighting?)

Brynhildr guessed at Waltraute's intentions.

"Fool!! Did you really think a tool developed to remove our armor while we lie motionless on a bed can do anything while we are moving at full speed!?"

"That is not the function I am using, you fool."

Waltraute grinned and unfolded one of the blades from the multi-tool knife.

Specifically, she unfolded the unwanted new function the dwarves had added with the extra gold.

As soon as she did, a large number of tentacles squirmed out while completely ignoring the law of conservation of mass.

“……
……What?”

Brynhildr was left dumbfounded and Waltraute said, “It seems the dwarves put in a little too much effort on this one. A Valkyrie caught by these things will supposedly pass out and foam at the mouth.”

“Nn…nn…nwwwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh

simultaneous attacks from two fronts, but his attack alone should be effective enough. …And it seems his attack uses that boy as its key."

"…What?"

Waltraute looked confused and Brynhildr's continued with a verbal finishing blow.

"It seems Loki hopes to have Surtr wield the magic sword Dáinsleif so the curse damages him. He plays the important role of burning away the nine worlds, so his defeat is bound to greatly affect the outcome of Ragnarök. But what do you think Surtr will do once he is cursed by Dáinsleif? At the very least, he is sure to view that boy from Midgard just as responsible for the plot as Loki."

"…"

"Loki has the ability to transform, so he may be able to escape Muspelheim in the form of a hawk or something. But will he be able to bring that human boy with him? In fact, will that evil god even show the integrity to worry about the boy at all? What do you think, Waltraute?"

Part 13

“Surtr, do you know about the magic sword Dáinsleif?”

Surtr finally turned toward the boy with a puzzled look. Then he wrinkled his brow grimly. A great ruler like him saw through it immediately. A slight remnant of a curse clung to the boy’s right hand.

(That abominable sword? But he did not draw it from its scabbard. That is only what leaked through the scabbard. If he had actually drawn it, this boy’s fate would already be sealed.)

Surtr snapped his fingers lightly.

Sparks flew from the boy’s palm similar to when a hot piece of iron was struck. The trace of the curse disappeared.

“…Do you possess the magic sword?”

Surtr thought for a second, but he quickly realized that could not be the case.

Dáinsleif’s curse was so powerful not even he could oppose it if he were to draw the sword from its scabbard.

“No, the scabbard is not enough to completely seal away Dáinsleif’s curse. If you carried it with you constantly, you would need some kind of countermeasure built into your flesh. However, I can sense no such trick in you. …You held it for the first time recently, didn’t you?”

Loki frowned slightly as he watched from a distance.

(He touched the hilt, but he never actually drew it. When that boy whose role should have been over reached for Dáinsleif himself, I thought some great change might be coming. I guess I was wrong.)

He traced his fingers along the sinister sword of red and black he held.

(I did not think he would change his mind at the last second. Was he afraid of the curse or of Surtr? That was just one of many options, but if the result of Ragnarök is not changed in a large way, over 99% of the humans in Midgard will perish.)

“Who has it? Was Loki the one behind this?”

“That doesn’t matter.” The boy shook his head. “Y’see, I heard the final battle of Ragnarök would begin once those ships are finished. Is that true?”

“Yes. We have been preparing for this for a very long time.”

"Why?"

"Because," said Surtr in a low voice. "Originally, we were equal. There was no distinction between gods and giants. But the process they used to create the nine worlds left most of us dead while most of them survived. And instead of trying to save us, they named themselves gods and insulted us by naming us giants!! And it was all because of a plan they came up with and carried out on their own! They rose up to the heavens while driving us to the outer edges of the worlds!!"

"Uuh…uuh…" The boy let out a groan because he could not come up with a way of expressing the thoughts in his head. But then, "But a bunch of giants will die during Ragnarök, right?"

"That does not matter. This hatred was inputted into us from the moment these worlds were created. All giants were born in order to carry out our revenge by destroying the nine worlds during Ragnarök!!"

"But, but! The Vanir were originally giants, right? It makes no sense to say you need revenge because you're giants or that you're okay with dying because you're giants."

"They were taken in by the Æsir! They forgot what they must do and worked to earn the favor of those so-called gods!! They are not true giants. We will never cast aside our pride!!"

Even as he shouted, Surtr felt like something did not quite add up.

Their pride as giants?

Their pride in the bigoted and derogatory designation that had been used to drive them to the outer edges of the worlds?

"This is my first time in Muspelheim, but it doesn't seem like the giants here are doing bad things."

"Of course not!! We have justice on our side! It is those so-called gods who…who…!!"

"Then it's wrong to die just to get revenge against them. I think the giants should be able to work to protect things, make things, and leave something behind. It's wrong to throw away all those feelings just because you are giants or to give up your life for the sake of revenge. That's…"

The boy trailed off, but Surtr knew what the boy was trying to say.

Yes.

From the moment the nine worlds had been created and from the moment they had been classified as being either holy gods or evil giants, they had been doing nothing different from the classification "those more powerful" had unilaterally forced upon them.

"…Boy. What would you have us do? What goal do you see beyond those words of yours!?"

“Put down your weapons,” said the boy decisively. “The note of the Gjallarhorn being blown may one day ring throughout the nine worlds. The sun and moon may one day be swallowed up. The chains binding the great wolf Fenrir may one day be broken. …But that day is not today.”

“…”

“We will convince our gods. We will have them lay down their weapons. So you lay you down your own weapons. If you do that, this world that had begun to end can contain a few smiles once more.”

“Hah,” laughed Surtr. “Can that happen? Can that really happen!? We do not trust them. And they do not trust us. If we ask each other to put down our weapons so we can talk this out, it can only lead to deception!! When they created the nine worlds, they tried to wipe us out. Can you really put down the only weapon you have to protect yourself before an opponent that has tried to kill you before!?”

“I can,” he replied immediately.

This was not just a nice thought or an idealistic statement.

It was backed by a certain strength.

The boy spread his empty hands and spoke.

“I made sure to put down my own weapon.”

Surtr froze completely in place at those words.

He recalled the magic sword Dáinsleif.

Even if a direct attack would have been hopeless, the boy could have used that sword to kill Surtr if he used some kind of trickery. That piece would have let him greatly change the outcome of Ragnarök. He might have been able to lessen the damage to the human world of Midgard in exchange for the utter destruction of the fire world of Muspelheim.

Even setting aside whether he could have actually killed Surtr or not, he would have been able to at least fight back.

But the boy had let go of that weapon without hesitation.

Not to run away once he knew his opponent was the ruler of evil but to speak with that ruler of evil.

Did cutting down such a boy coincide with the justice Surtr and the giants claimed to have on their side?

This was not an enemy displaying clear malice.

Should the proper ruler of Muspelheim turn hatred in the direction of someone who held no hostility and even laid down his weapon out of respect?

(He said this was a journey to grow stronger.)

Surtr gritted his teeth.

Despite being the ruler of the fire world of Muspelheim and despite his overwhelming size, Surtr was jealous of this puny human.

(So is this the type of power and strength you seek!?)

“I cannot accept it.”

Surtr drew the giant sword from the scabbard on his back.

It was over three meters long. It was made entirely out of a silver that was almost black. Orange sparks flew from the blade of that ominous sword. A single swing of that sword could send a great rain of fire pouring down from the sky. If it was stabbed into the trunk of the world tree Yggdrasil, I was said it would burn away the nine worlds. It was perhaps the greatest of all magic swords. And he pulled it out when faced with a single boy.

“I cannot accept that strength!! I will give you some time. Go and retrieve Dáinsleif! Return and fight me!!”

“No.”

“Are you afraid of that magic sword’s curse? If you fear for your life, call for help from the Valkyrie just beyond our defensive lines!! Send that divine punishment to fight me!!”

“Never,” declared the boy decisively. “I came to your world to gain a strength that would not spill any blood. I still believe I can gain that strength if I train here. That is why I will never rely on this type of fighting.”

With those words, the boy was treating Surtr as something other than the ruler of evil.

He was treating him as someone with great power.

He was treating him as someone who could grant his wish.

He was treating him as someone who had been treated equally in the age before gods and giants.

He said he believed.

That is what that boy said to that existence that held such great power.

“…”

Surtr gritted his teeth as he thought about that clumsy courtesy.

But he could not put his sword away.

As the ruler of Muspelheim and the leader of the many Muspell giants, Surtr let out a roar and swung down his flame sword.

“Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooohhhh

Part 14

After neutralizing the other eight Valkyries, Waltraute watched what was occurring within the fire world of Muspelheim.

Flames blew about.

Light and heat wiped away the night.

The destructive power was more than enough to befit the ruler of evil.

But…

"He cannot do it," muttered Waltraute.

In the next moment, Surtr stopped that flame sword that symbolized destructive power. The boy had not moved even at the last moment. He had not shut his eyes. He had simply stared directly at Surtr the entire time. And he was completely unscathed.

Surtr had halted his attack.

"That boy treated you as a respected god rather than an evil giant. As the ruler of an entire world, you could not return such feelings with cruelty. This was a crossroads where you could either affirm or deny that Muspelheim is a world of evil. This was a decision as a ruler that would affect the fates of all Muspell giants."

And Surtr had made the decision of a god rather than of a giant.

He had saved the life of the one who had lifted up a prayer to him.

And it had been that boy's strength that had allowed him to remember that.

Waltraute herself had long viewed the great gap between god and giant as completely natural.

She was one of those who benefitted from it.

"Soul of Midgard," said Surtr.

"What?"

"Even if I lay down my weapon here, the tragedy cannot be avoided unless Odin replies in kind as the leader of the Æsir. What will you do about this problem?"

"I will stop it of course," replied the boy decisively. "We – Waltraute and I, that is – will make sure Lord Odin lays down his weapon."

“Heh,” laughed Surtr.

It was a small but definite thing. It was possible one of the Muspell had never before been brought to laughter by a soul of the human world.

And the laughter grew.

“Ha ha ha ha ha!! Interesting. Then get going and stop that war-obsessed old man!! Prove your sincerity with that! But it won’t be easy. After all, we have yet to see even the beginning of a resolution even after facing each other down over this issue for more than 1000 years!!”

Having said that, Surtr let go of his flame sword. The giant sword stabbed into the hard ground, but no major change occurred.

That sword would no longer produce flames or burn away any of the worlds.

He had lost an element of himself as a giant and as a ruler, but Surtr only glanced down at the sword with strong feeling in his eyes.

“…I put it down. Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!! I put it down! I put down my weapon! I don’t need to kill anyone!!”

“Yes.”

“I feel light. I can feel my stiff muscles loosening up. I see. So this is what it feels like to be freed from that environment of kill or be killed.”

“That’s right, ruler of Muspelheim.”

“But how are you going to get the Æsir and Vanir to put down their weapons?”

“Don’t worry,” said the boy with a smile. “I can get my wife’s help. If she talks it out with them, it’ll all be okay.”

“Hmph,” snorted Waltraute as she turned away.

Everyone would have things a lot easier if the Æsir were so easily dealt with. The head god was a war god who liked to start wars. Just like a harvest god would cause crops to grow for no reason, that war god did not need a real reason. If the situation allowed for a war to occur, he would cause one. That was how he had always acted throughout history.

“…What will you do?” asked the eldest sister Brynhildr.

She believed in defeating someone before they defeated her, so she no longer saw attacking Muspelheim a necessity now that it was not an immediate threat. The fact that she would not act

in a heartless manner as long as one did not turn a weapon towards her displayed the humanity(?) of Brynhildr that she rarely showed on the surface.

After Waltraute threatened to send out those tentacles the instant they tried anything, the other seven Valkyries grew obedient. (Although the fact they had lost the competition may have played a larger role.) Just as the holy spear Gungnir symbolized the head god and the lightning hammer Mjölnir symbolized the lightning god, the golden tool Waltraute held symbolized the weakness of a Valkyrie.

If that tool was fully activated, their hearts might stop due to a highly unairable reason.

The only way Brynhildr and the others could resist it would be to become something other than Valkyries.

Waltraute decided the item's abilities were too much for her to give it back to the boy for the time being.

"This is a difficult issue," she admitted. "But it is the job of a wife and a god to meet the expectations of her husband and believer. I have no choice but to do something rather reckless."

"Meaning?"

"I will talk this over with Odin after beating him to a pulp."

Part 15

And only one final problem remained.

After making sure a sobbing Odin declared a truce, Waltraute left the heavenly hall of Valhalla. As she did, she spotted an evil god entering.

It was Loki.

He was the one who had plotted out the entire incident.

A sharp look entered Waltraute's eyes as she recalled all the various dangers that had approached that boy.

"I suppose the Norns' prediction has been avoided just as you planned," she said.

"Are you trying to say Ragnarök has been completely avoided? Do not be naïve. Fate has been twisted, but it will be mended in a different form. After all, Naglfar is not the only impetus for the beginning of Ragnarök. The sun and moon disappearing, the chains binding Fenrir breaking…there are plenty prepared. Even if a single cause disappears, the core of the issue will shift to a different impetus and the countdown towards Ragnarök will continue on. This merely delayed it. It will happen sooner or later; this just shifted its timing."

"So this will happen again?"

"It is inevitable at the current rate," said Loki casually. "Not even Odin can avoid the Norns' predictions. They are so accurate you would think their mouths are curses in and of themselves. …I don't like it. As a joker, a world with everything set in stone is no fun."

"So that is where your essence lies, you evil god." Waltraute's tone of voice dropped even further. "You would never have an admirable objective like avoiding Ragnarök or protecting the nine worlds. You just want to cause trouble. You only act according to your nickname of joker. Even if this pushes Ragnarök in an even worse direction, you would not care in the slightest, would you?"

"I am not the one that decides the value of a joker. That changes depending on the rules of the game. The joker can be the best card that leads one to victory or it can be the worst card that leads one to defeat. Don't you think that is what it means to be a joker?" Loki smiled thinly. "But if you ask me, that human boy is quite something. I throw the rules into disarray as a joker, but even that is only within the confines of the rules. But that boy is different. When I handed Dáinsleif to him, that option did not exist. His actions did not exist within the rules. That may be what it is to be human."

"…"

“At that point, the only two options were to take the weapon or to not take the weapon. But that boy saw meaning in taking the weapon but then casting it aside. He did not simply *not* take it. There is a difference between that and letting it go after taking it. He used that difference to his advantage.”

Even if the boy had used the exact same words while confronting Surtr, the giant would not have been as moved by his words had the boy simply come empty handed. He would have rejected the boy’s ideas as the idealistic view of someone who had never even picked up his weapon.

And if he had stood before Surtr while still holding the weapon, Surtr would have sliced the boy in two no matter what reason the boy had. That ruler of the giants had trained himself and others for battle with the gods who ruled the worlds. He would have shown no mercy. No matter how much he might have agonized over it later, he would have brought it all to a clear end when that boy stood before him.

It was unclear how much of that the boy had done intentionally.

It was possible it had been all the more effective *because* the boy had not done it intentionally.

But whatever the reason…

“I can see why that war god Odin is so obsessed with this boy. Odin’s role is not to protect those who fight in wars; it is to ensure war itself persists. You could say that boy is his natural enemy. I doubt Odin himself is actually aware he views that boy as his natural enemy, though. The final battle of Ragnarök is both Odin’s ultimate end and also his greatest accomplishment as a war god. Since that boy managed to easily stop such a great war, his nature must counterbalance that of Odin.”

A world where war was seen as natural.

A world where the heroic war dead were lead to the heavenly world and those who died of old age and illness were sent to the underworld.

A world in which a war god ruled at the top and people were taught that was a virtuous thing.

That boy was a puny creature and his soul would never be anything but a soul of Midgard. In other words, he would eventually die as a human. He could only live in the basic cycle of life so he was nothing but a “puny” existence from a god’s point of view.

However…

Even so, the answer the boy had given here held a possibility great enough to overturn the basic assumptions of that world ruled by a war god where war was natural.

Loki shrugged and said, “Waltraute, it seems you have an excellent eye for men. Given the nature of Valkyries, he seems a bit unsuited for you, but who else is such a great mass of military

might supposed to marry? Perhaps someone like him is needed to balance out the scales. Much like how the war god Odin is bound to the goddess of marriage Frigg."

"H-hmph. He is not that great a soul. That boy's soul is completely overshadowed when compared to the human Siegfried who once temporarily separated Brynhildr from the nine-Valkyrie system." Despite denying Loki's words, Waltraute went on to say, "But he is still the boy who attempted to climb the world tree and won that competition with me. As the impartial overseer of that competition, it is my duty to pay him a proper reward."

"When you were trapped within the gears of that war god, you would have found it difficult to say he 'won' given how that competition ended."

Loki grinned, but he then changed the subject.

It seemed seeing Waltraute's reaction had achieved his goal.

"But I will continue to carry out my role as a joker. I will cause as much trouble as I can with fate set by the Norns' predictions. If one is able to skillfully turn the movements of the cards in a direction that benefits him, he will be able to gather a fortune. You should pray you can handle yourself well."

"I see." Waltraute let out a light sigh. "By the way, I just finished going on a bit of a rampage within Valhalla."

"So it seems. It sets a bad example for the house of the gods to be in such disrepair."

"I do not want to let anyone slip through the cracks. I need to ensure my warning is as thorough as possible."

"…What?" muttered Loki as the Valkyrie held a Spear of Destroying Lightning in her right hand.

In the next instant, she let loose the greatest strike that day.

A.E. 01: This is No Time to be Getting Excited about Swimsuits

Part 1

As usual, Waltraute was stationed on the third runway of Bifröst.

The goddess of marriage Frigg, the goddess of beauty Freyja, and the other Valkyries were also sitting there, so the third runway had undergone a job change from transportation facility to party hall. Heimdallr the watchman had completely given up. He had switched his thought process over to concentrating all of the disasters to the third runway so that the other runways could run smoothly.

On this day, a new goddess arrived at the third runway.

It was the fertility goddess Iðunn who grew the apples of immortality.

Iðunn had a bandanna wrapped around her head and wore a waitress-like outfit made from simple country-style clothes. (And she had the extremely huge breasts one would expect of a fertility goddess.) She held a large basket filled with apples and she spoke up hesitantly.

“Um, it is just about apple season.”

“Oh, is it that time already?”

Waltraute took an apple of immortality out of the basket held out towards her. The red fruit almost looked transparent as if it was a ruby or something similar, but when its skin was peeled, it contained juicy white fruit. The fruits of the gods were quite strange.

It was not due to an intrinsic physical characteristic that the gods did not age; it was due to these apples.

The goddess Iðunn was the only one able to grow them, so the heavenly world of Asgard had turned into an extremely aged society filled with old men and women when the evil god Loki had kidnapped her.

As long as they ate the apples in accordance to a set cycle, the gods would never age.

However, the concept of age did not disappear entirely.

“Um, Lady Frigg? Why have you been frozen in place staring at the apples?”

“Uuh!? N-no reason at all. Ho ho ho. It is just that I am a bit full right now.”

The goddess of marriage Frigg let out a dry laugh, but the goddess of beauty Freyja grinned and spoke up.

“Lady Frigg, how many have you eaten this year in total? How many apples?”

“Kh!!”

“Well, it is similar to the number of candles on a birthday cake. Even if nothing changes visual, it still bothers you.”

“My actual age is not that much different from yours!! The only a difference is at what stage we maintain our apparent age!!”

(What are they doing?)

Waltraute watched the two argue with a shocked look.

If the number of apples eaten could change their age, it would be easy to manipulate the order of the nine Valkyries.

Waltraute bit into an apple of immortality without bothering to peel it.

Iðunn’s cultivation ability was apparent in how Waltraute felt like she was eating sherbet. The fruit had enough moisture to carry one around in lieu of a water bottle and the slight sourness at the center of the sweetness was wonderful. To put it simply, the apple was delicious.

(I need to avoid entering into a cultivation-related competition with her.)

As Waltraute was focused on competitions as usual, Iðunn spoke to her.

“Um…”

“What?”

“What about that boy?”

“?”

“The apples. These apples. The apples of immortality.” The fertility goddess Iðunn shook the basket she held in both hands. “The general rule is to not bring them to Midgard, but that boy is your husband so he could be considered to be part of Asgard. So should I bring him an apple of immortality?”

“Hm. So that is what you meant.”

“The human lifespan is supposed to be only 100 years. He will be a wrinkled old man in no time at all. If you are going to give him an apple of immortality, I think you should do so as soon as possible.”

“Hmm. But…” Waltraute munched on her apple. “Is it really okay to give immortality to a soul from Midgard? If the boy is made immortal, won’t he be treated as an outsider by human society?”

“That is a difficult theme.”

“And if he is given an apple of immortality at this stage, his physical body will stop where it is. It is just… I am not sure I should decide for him to take away the possibility of growth.”

Freyja had gotten tired of making fun of Frigg, so she cut in.

“Ha hahhn!! So you want to let that boy grow into the ideal young man and then feed him apples of immortality forever to lock him in place there!? A surprisingly good idea coming from you!!”

“Keep your delusions to yourself, you fool!!”

“But younger is always better. Giving him an apple of immortality once he is an old man does no one any good. They say what’s inside is what counts, but when it’s the same person inside either way, why would you choose the old one?”

Each of those words just so happened to stab into Frigg, but since it was Freyja, that was likely intentional.

Iðunn seemed to agree with that.

“Um, humans and gods see time differently, so you should probably make up your mind quickly. It is possible his hair will have gone gray before you know it.”

While munching on her apple of immortality, Waltraute said, “Argh, you fools!! This is not something to be decided only by the gods! What matters most is what that boy thinks about it!!”

“Yeah, but if you put an apple of immortality in front of a mortal human and ask him what he will do, the internal conflict might break his mind.”

“Um, I would be more afraid of other people seeing it and beginning to kill each other for it.”

Waltraute had eaten her apple down to the core, so she reached for a second from Iðunn’s basket.

“But that boy’s life belongs to him! Manipulating it for our own benefit sounds like something that one-eyed bearded old man would do! I do not like it!!”

Munch munch.

“Enough of that. It comes down to a single issue: young and lively or old and wrinkly!? Which will it be? Young and lively? Old and wrinkly!?”

“Um, come to think of it, what is the ideal level in your eyes, Lady Waltraute? A little boy, an underclassman, a classmate, an upperclassman, or a gentleman?”

“Wh-what are you even talking about, you fools!? I am trying to talk about the weight of a human’s life!!”

Munch munch munch munch!

“It’s little boys. She’s definitely into little boys.”

“Yes, she does have the look about her.”

“Do not decide that on your own!! And what do you mean by ‘the look’!?”

Munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch!!

“No, wait, Waltraute.”

“Um, the number of apples of immortality you eat is a complex calculation.”

“Do not decide what people’s tastes are based on how they look. In fact, physical appearance means nothing to me. I never said he needed to look like that. It is just that the boy who won my hand in marriage in a competition happened to be that age!!”

Munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch munch!!

“Waltraute!! Wait a second! Stop, stop!!

“Wahh! If you eat that many…!”

“Munch munch!! Munch munch chomp chomp munch munch!! …Hm? Huh!? Wait. How many apples of immortality have I eaten!?”

The change came quickly.

As stated before, Asgard had turned into an extremely aged society filled with old men and women when the evil god Loki had kidnapped the fertility goddess Iðunn. So how had they returned to their youthful appearances afterwards?

The answer was simple: They had eaten a ton of the apples of immortality.

And so…

“W-w-waaaahhhhhhhhh!?”

Waltraute shouted out as her body was wrapped in white light.

The flash of light continued for a short period.

Finally, the light disappeared. And what it left behind was…

Waltraute with the appearance of a 10 year old.

That is what became of that invincible older sister type.

Freyja twisted her face into a grimace and clicked her tongue.

“Damn you!! Did you feel you needed more going for you to overcome my popularity!?”

“I did not do this because I wanted to, you fool!! And what exactly happened? My body has shrunk and my armor is slipping off. Don’t tell this is permanent!”

As Waltraute panicked, Frigg began grabbing as many apples as she could with a determined look on her face.

But then Iðunn replied, “Um, your most stable physical age does not change. Most of the time, it is your age upon first eating the apples. At any rate, any forced change to your apparent age should only be temporary.”

Frigg had been frantically trying to gather apples, but she now stiffened with despair. However, no one was looking in her direction.

Waltraute patted at her small body.

“I-I see. So I will return to normal after some time passes. …Good.”

“Oh, I thought it was a desperate attempt to boost sales,” commented Freyja.

“You have been doing nothing but mocking me. Do I need to teach you a lesson with this Spear of Destroying Lightning?”

“Fwa ha ha ha!! Waltraute’s small body – ha ha – won’t be able to produce enough power to do anythi-…ngyaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh!?”

Freyja just barely managed to void the giant beam produced. It seemed she had a fair amount of combat skill herself.

“Oh, c’mon. If you’re gonna burn my skin, keep it to candles!! When you go beyond a brand, there is nothing erotic about it!!”

Meanwhile, the small Waltraute said, “Huh? Why did that fly out just now?”

“Um, your body may have shrunk, but your soul is the same. You do not have as great an ability to control the output of the energy, so explosions may be more likely to occur.”

“I see. And the initial velocity may have been even higher than usual.”

“It’s more powerful and she can’t control it? She’s basically unexploded ordnance now…”

“I will return to normal given some time, so there is no problem. …As long as a certain someone does not anger me during that time.”

After the small Waltraute gave that warning, the two crows Huginn and Muninn arrived.

“Huh? We have a message for Lady Waltraute.”

“Wait! Did she finally make the shift over to a more niche character type!?”

One of the ravens made that comment as if he(?) was not afraid of the gods, but the other raven made another comment before Waltraute could reply.

“We found another letter on the weather vane of the boy’s house.”

“I see.”

As Waltraute lived in the heavenly world of Asgard and the boy lived in the human world of Midgard, they could not contact each other easily. And so they used letters to keep in touch.

The raven must have used its beak to untie the letter from the weather vane and then retie it to its leg. The small Waltraute took the letter that had been tied to Muninn’s leg.

It said the following in messy handwriting:

“Let’s play!”

“…!! Honestly, that boy never learns. How many times do I need to tell him I will only accept these ridiculous requests if he defeats me in a competition!?”

“You say that, but you’re already cheerfully climbing aboard your white horse.”

“Because I must lecture him! And if he defeats me in a competition, I must consider it!!”

“Um,” cut in the apple fertility goddess Iðunn. “Come to think of it, I occasionally hear about you going to play or on a date, but have you actually had a honeymoon yet, Lady Waltraute?”

“We do not need anything so formal. …Also, from a mythological and cultural standpoint, I do not think Midgard has the concept of a honeymoo-…”

Before the small Waltraute could finish, life returned to the depressed goddess of marriage Frigg.

“This cannot stand, Waltraute!!”

“Ee!?”

“A peaceful household must be built atop a proper foundation!! You cannot grow lazy just because you have gotten married. Marriage is not the goal; it is a new starting line!!”

Frigg’s bloodshot eyes made it clear she was dissatisfied with her own marriage. She spoke with such intensity that even the small Waltraute was pushed back.

“B-but… I have travelled between the nine worlds as a Valkyrie and the boy has already visited other worlds on multiple occasions. I cannot think of anywhere we could go that would be impressive enough for-…”

“You fool!!!!! It doesn’t matter where! Just go somewhere!!”

“I cannot accept such an unreasonable demand even from you, Lady Frigg! If you insist on it, then you must defeat me in a competition!!”

“A tongue twister competition then!! Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers!!”

“Peter Piper picked a pye…ow!!”

It was over almost immediately.

The small Waltraute held her bit tongue with tears in her eyes and Freyja spoke up with a bored look.

“It’s pretty hot today, so why don’t you go swimming? Come to think of it, there has been a severe lack of exposed skin for a love comedy.”

“Mhh,” groaned the small Waltraute, but she had lost the competition.

She used the power of the Bifröst runway to break her existence apart and descended to Midgard while drawing an unnatural aurora through the sky.

“But,” said the goddess of beauty Freyja lazily. “The first challenge will be whether he recognizes Waltraute in that tiny form.”

Part 2

And…

“Who are you!?”

The boy’s eyes opened wide when he saw the Valkyrie with a 10-year-old appearance riding the giant white horse.

The blonde-haired, blue-eyed Valkyrie shook her small hands around and said, “I am Waltraute of course!! How can you not know that, you fool!?”

“No way!! Waltraute is more beautiful, more gallant, cooler, cuter, smarter looking, and stronger looking!! She has silky hair, smooth skin, and sparkling eyes!!”

“I-is that so? I suppose I cannot feel bad when you are complimenting me that much.”

“Why are you blushing when I compliment her?”

The boy was suspicious, but then he realized something.

He recognized the round eyes of the white horse the small Waltraute was riding.

“That horsie is Waltraute’s…”

“Again: I *am* Waltraute!!”

“Hey, horsie. What is going on? Tell me what’s going on!?”

But even if it was from the heavenly world, a horse was still a horse.

It could not reply in human words even if it was asked.

“I-I’ll give you a carrot, so tell me!”

An explosive reform came over the white horse’s frontal lobe and it began writing on the ground with its front hoof.

But the boy frowned.

“…I can’t read it.”

The white horse’s large form shook in shock, but the issue was not the horse’s handwriting. There was simply too much difference between the imperfect runes of the human world and the perfect runes of the heavenly world. For that reason, the horse’s runes were actually more accurate to the world’s standards.

“Sorry, horsie, but no carrot for you.”

“Oohhhh!? Do not suddenly start a rodeo, you fool!!”

The white horse tried to express its sorrow with its entire body and started throwing around the small Waltraute. The Valkyrie desperately grabbed at the reins.

That was when a goddess arrived in Midgard.

It was the goddess of beauty Freyja.

Instead of a horse, she rode a boar that was obviously much too large. It was over 4 meters tall.

“I knew this would happen. C’mon, Freyja here will explain it all for you, so you had better be thankful.”

When he heard that voice, the boy turned around and his shoulders jumped in shock.

“Th-th-this is…”

“Hmm? Oh, is my aura enough that I do not even need to introduce myself? Heh heh heh. That’s right, that’s right. I am Freyja, the goddess of beauty! My beauty is enough to win over anyone regardless of age or sex. Frankly, it scares me sometimes. My very existence is so bright it demonstrates my divinity!!”

“It’s a piggy!! It’s so huge!!”

“You’re focused on that!? Just so you know, a soul in the human world only has a 0.003% chance of seeing such great beauty over their entire lifetime!!”

The boy ignored Freyja’s shrill voice (and the small Waltraute breathed a secret sigh of relief but refused to let anyone else know), raised his hands, and charged into the side of the giant boar. He sank into the thick fur.

“The piggy is so warm.”

Meanwhile, the giant boar was writhing around as if to say “S-st-stop that. I-I’ll shout for help… Aaahhh!!”, but the boy showed no sign of noticing.

“Oh, this piggy has udders. Is it a girl?”

With the sound of something soft being squeezed, the giant boar began having NTR-related convulsions as it seemed to say, “Eee!! Ahhhn!! N-no! I already have Lady Freyja as my master…but…but…It’s flowing ouuuuuttttttttt!!”

Meanwhile, Freyja had grown quite angry over being completely ignored.

“This isn’t going to get anywhere at this rate!! I am going to explain everything, so focus on Freyja here!!”

“Wait!! The piggy has started looking for truffles, so don’t get in the way!!”

“So you’ve given into your hunger!?” shouted Freyja.

In reality, the giant boar was thinking “Pant, pant. I-I need to get that boy focused on something other than me…uuh… But no. I can’t hide my pleasure in working up a sweat for him!” However, no one else noticed that.

“At any rate, look at Freyja here!!”

“Why do you keep yelling?”

It was never going to end at that rate.

Plus, her entire identity as the goddess of beauty was at risk if a boy was more interested in a wild boar than her.

But once the boy did finally turn his focus towards Freyja for the first time since she had arrived, he covered his face with his hands.

“Wahh! You’re too bright! I can’t see!”

“Oh? Is Freyja so sexy I have to be censored during terrestrial broadcast? Wait just a second.”

She lowered the level of her divinity as the goddess of beauty and adjusted the clothing that had fallen out of place in various locations. After the rating had been lowered far enough, she continued.

“Well, boy? Can you see me now?”

“Hm, you definitely are a goddess, but you’re just a normal goddess. Waltraute is way more beautiful.”

“What!? You idiot! This is only the level of beauty that it is possible for your eyes to grasp! …And why do I have to lose to that battle-obsessed idiot of all people!? Just you watch, dammit. I’ll go full power. This is the transcendent and bewitching beauty of Freyja who stands at the top of the nine worlds!!”

“Wah! It’s so bright I can’t see anything!”

“The human world is real pain in the ass!!”

Freyja started tearing at her hair. She had gotten completely sidetracked and had forgotten all about the small Waltraute. It seemed the situation was not going to get anywhere, but then someone arrived to save the plot.

It was Brynhildr, the eldest of the nine Valkyrie sisters.

Just like the fourth sister Waltraute, the armored lady rode a giant white horse.

With no visible expression, she said, “I cannot stand to watch this any longer. I have no obligation to help, but I will explain everything. All of you just calm down.”

Part 3

“The gods of Asgard must periodically consume apples of immortality.”

“I see, I see.”

“The number eaten is meticulously calculated out to stop any aging. Eating an erroneous amount can temporarily give one a younger appearance.”

“Ohh…”

“And Waltraute ate too many of those apples.”

“Ehh!? Is Waltraute okay? Did she get a stomachache!?”

It took only 5 minutes to finish the explanation.

The small Waltraute and Freyja (who had put in a bit too much effort earlier) were both hanging their heads in shame.

“…What was all that effort even for?”

“I’m the goddess of beauty. Of course I’m going to get mad when it comes to beauty…grumble grumble.”

As Brynhildr sat atop her white horse, her expressionless eyes narrowed slightly as she looked at the boy. A thought appeared to have passed through her mind.

“It seems no matter the age, there will be humans who seek after Valkyries.”

“?”

“Seeing you reminds me of when I met the human Siegfried.”

The small Waltraute and the goddess of beauty Freyja looked even more puzzled than the boy did.

“(Wasn’t Siegfried an exceedingly muscular macho man? He was the hero who sliced the evil dragon Fáfnir in two using a single sword and then ate its heart.)”

“(She’s a reminiscing widow. She’s probably beautifying her memories like crazy.)”

It seemed Brynhildr had not heard their comments.

The boy patted the white horse on the neck.

“Are you married, Mrs. Brynhildr? I am too.”

“…I am.” A small and somehow bitter smile appeared on the Valkyrie’s lips. “Or technically, I used to be.”

“Then you’re my senior in this marriage thing!”

“Hm?”

“When I grow up, I’m going to be a mead maker. I wonder if I can support Waltraute properly like that.”

“…You can,” replied Brynhildr with the smile gone but with the edge to her tone also gone. “At the very least, you will be able to make a Valkyrie happier than some idiot who constantly charges into danger on a quest to be a hero can.”

Brynhildr seemed to be saying something nice, but…

“(The way she put that, you would think Siegfried had a heroic death on some reckless adventure, but didn’t he die because she got mad and used Gunnar and Guttorm to stab him in the back with a spear?)”

“(More beautification. She’s just going to keep doing it, so ignore her. She was made to sleep with a man she did not love and Siegfried was made to forget her in preparation for that. Their marriage had a lot of problems.)”

Those soap opera-esque parts were of course omitted as they could not let the boy hear them.

Part 4

It had all become a bit muddled due to Waltraute's transformation, but the theme of this chapter was their honeymoon.

"What's a honeymoon?"

"See? I told you it is not a standard part of Midgard culture, you fools!!"

The small Waltraute lamented that the boy did not understand even after an explanation and Freyja sat cross-legged on her giant boar (which left various parts quite visible).

Sounding disinterested, the goddess said, "The human world is just set as being a 'medieval European fantasy world', so don't worry about the details. Being technically correct was thrown out the window from the moment the metric system and the 60 minute hour were used."

"Is it a type of trip? Do you have work to do, Waltraute?"

"No, no. It is not a trip to go sell something. ….Hey, Freyja. What do you do on a honeymoon anyway?"

"Well, you go far away and your festive spirits will make sure you cannot leave anytime soon. That means you will have to stay at an inn where you can kiss and kiss and kiss and then head to the bed where-…"

"I get the picture, you sow. I was a fool to ask you."

The small Waltraute pressed a finger against her temple and asked Brynhildr instead.

With no change of expression, the eldest Valkyrie sister replied, "You kiss a lot."

"Dammit, you are no help either!!"

"However, Siegfried was the type to not listen and go fast and hard. And he would just go to sleep as soon as he was satisfied. I recall being very angry with him."

"Oh, I know what that's like," said Freyja. "Those hero types always think about nothing but winning competitions of stamina, so they will always act like children. If only they would understand that is simply being inefficient."

Brynhildr and Freyja began energetically discussing the matter while giggling. The small Waltraute felt a headache coming on, but then Brynhildr turned toward her and spoke.

"I have no intention of saying anything about your relationship or the apparent distance between the two of you. But if I recall, the idea of swimming in the ocean was suggested back at Bifröst."

“The ocean!?” shouted the boy hysterically.

However, this was not because his heart was filled with excited expectations for a grand leisure event.

“You’ll drown if you go into the ocean! If you need to cross it, you can just use a boat!”

“…See? It looks like swimming in the ocean is no good in the eyes of Midgard either. Swimming is probably an extremely specialized skill for them.”

The goddess of beauty Freyja could not let that go by without comment.

This had entered her territory.

“You idiot! If you say that, there will never be a swimsuit chapter!! This is a love comedy, remember? This world needs to prioritize love and comedy. If detailed historical accuracy would get in the way of the love comedy aspects, the laws of this world will ensure that historical accuracy is thrown out!!”

“Are swimsuits even a thing here? Even if Midgard has a vague ‘medieval European fantasy world’ setting, synthetic fibers are going a bit too far.”

“True,” said Brynhildr as she let out a slight groan. “If we are going to stick to the cultural standards of Midgard, bathing in a spring would be the most accurate. …And that means the proper style would be bathing completely nude outdoo-…”

“Okay, swimsuits it is! This is a love comedy after all!!”

Part 5

The blue ocean.

The white sand.

The bright sun.

All those things came together in a trip to the beach. But the most important aspect was the girls in swimsuits. No focus could be wasted on those background elements.

However…

“Why am I the only one without a swimsuit?” asked Waltraute.

“Because you got so small all of a sudden!! Or do you want to try wrapping a baggy bikini around your body!?”

“And Freyja, why are you and the other eight Valkyries all here and wearing swimsuits!?”

“That’s a good question. My guess would be because this is the swimsuit chapter.”

“Why are there nine other women along on our honeymoon!? Lady Frigg should have been more specific when she challenged me to that competition!!”

“Yes, yes. ‘I wanted that boy to only look at me. Kiss kiss.’ ”

The small Waltraute gritted her teeth, but the other eight Valkyries had already headed into the water. It seemed some level of order remained amid the chaos thanks to the fact that they were not all trying to steal the boy for themselves.

“…I am the third sister Ortlinde. …I have nothing going for me. …In that once-in-a-lifetime battle I was treated as one of the ‘others’, my special skill was never explained, and I was taken out by tentacles. …Today, I think I will do my best by using a finger to fix my swimsuit when it rides up and pushing my breasts together with my arms.”

“At least you had your name mentioned. Does anyone even know who the sixth sister is? No one would know whether Helmwige referred to a boy or girl, or even if it was the name of a person or a weapon. I’m prepared to at least have my top fall off today.”

“I’m the eighth sister. The name’s Grimgerde. Why did I have to be the eighth sister rather than the youngest ninth sister? The eldest sister, the second sister, the third sister, and the youngest sister are the only ones that sound unique. And despite being the fourth sister, Waltraute is a special case. Frankly, it would be a miracle to get an illustration of all nine of us. There just wouldn’t be enough space.”

"…But I am the third sister and I have barely appeared. …Since I have some fair sized breasts, I think I will try going with a hand-bra. This chapter is specifically for the novel, so let's try to get a pinup color illustration with all of us in it."

"The novel will have to line up all of the covers for the magazine chapters and it also needs a character introduction for at least Waltraute and the boy, so the odds of that are almost zero. Once again: I'm the eighth sister."

Even if some of them were falling into a spiral of negativity that threatened to turn the pure white beach into a small black hole, the area was mostly wrapped in the mood of an optimistic event.

With the nine Valkyrie sisters (minus the fourth sister) and the goddess of beauty Freyja all wearing swimsuits, any artist or minstrel who happened to see it would go insane from the explosion of inspiration the incredibly sweet scene would give him.

And as for the "winning team" whose names had been given, who had been given decent appearances, and whose special skills had been explained…

"Mh, ninth sister Rossweisse! What is that unnatural school swimsuit-shaped tan line!? You prepared for this ahead of time, didn't you!?"

"No, no, second sister Gerhilde. This is due to the heavy armor I always wear."

"What kind of armor leaves a tan line like that?"

"Brynhildr, help me out here. Let's bury her. Let's bury this seducing youngest sister."

"Eh? W-well, burying someone in the sand is a standard event for beach trips, so I'll gladly let you do that."

"Let's bury her upside down up to her ankles."

"That won't leave anything!! No one would like that except for people who are only attracted to the space between a girl's big toe and second toe!!"

And then there was the group of airheaded sisters who did not care whether they were on the "winning team" or the "losing team".

"Seventh sister Siegrune, you're the one piece type?"

"I don't understand how anyone could swim in the ocean with a two piece or a bikini, fifth sister Schwertleite. You mustn't underestimate the currents or the resistance of the water."

"Actually, you haven't been approaching the waves at all, seventh sister Siegrune."

“Laying out on the beach is much more efficient way of showing off your body, fifth sister Schwertleite. It isn’t that I am afraid of water and can’t swim.”

“Oh, Freyja here has some advice regarding that! Not being able to swim is actually a plus in a swimsuit chapter! You can cling to the guy’s chest as he teaches you to swim! He’ll be yours in no time!!”

“I-I already said it wasn’t that I can’t swim, you whore! And what is with that unexplainably erotic swimsuit?”

“Unfortunately, no one can see it due to the terrestrial broadcast censorship.”

Meanwhile…

The fourth sister Waltraute was all alone and unable to join the winning team, the losing team, or the neither team. She was sitting at a distant point of the beach with her arms around her knees.

“Not only can I not take part, but normally I would be the one in the limelight in this situation. Shouldn’t the emergency situation of me shrinking down like this take up the entire story!?”

No matter what happened, the girl without a swimsuit had no way of taking part in the swimsuit chapter.

But even if the (incredibly irresponsible) gods had abandoned her, someone still reached out a saving hand to her.

It was the boy.

“Waltraute.”

“Mh!? Do not call out to me so casually, you fool. Only call my name in an emergenc…vah vah wahh!!”

As soon as the small Waltraute turned around, countless Spears of Destroying Lightning fired from her back. Her vision had unexpectedly been filled with the boy’s slender swimsuit-wearing form.

As he was wearing a guy’s swimsuit, he was half naked.

Tilting his head, he asked, “What is it, Waltraute?”

“Do not worry about it. And I am banning all competition involving vague artistic aspects such as a swimsuit competition.”

“?”

The boy still did not seem to know what she was trying to say, so he changed the subject.

“Let’s play.”

“I told you not to call out to me so casually. If you insist on bringing such requests to me, you must first defeat me in a competition.”

“Then let’s have a kitty dance competition!!”

“Bfh!?”

“Nyahn, nyahn. Nyahn, nyan, nyan, nyahn.”

“Wait!! Are you asking me to do that too!? And what exactly decides this competition!? I just said no more artistic competitions!!”

However, the boy’s dance had already reached its climax. Waltraute had no idea what the basis of the competition was, but she sensed she would be left behind if she did nothing. And so she (in her 10 year old form) started imitating him by lightly clenched her fists and waving her wrists around.

“N-n-nyahn nyahn…”

And then the other eight Valkyrie sisters and Freyja all turned their attention to Waltraute.

“Nooooo!! I don’t care if I lose now. I don’t care at allllllllllllllllllllll!!”

Unable to bear it, Waltraute curled up, let out a cry like a bearded military commander, and started beating on the rocky coast so hard that cracks ran through it.

But due to Waltraute’s small appearance…

“(Actually, isn’t this the first time they can actually have an evenly matched competition?)” commented the eldest sister Brynhildr.

“(How much has space and time been warped for all the focus of the swimsuit chapter to be on the one character not wearing a swimsuit?)” commented the second sister Gerhilde.

“(Nya ha ha ha ha!! The fact that she looks perfectly suited for that kitty dance is a gag in and of itself!! This isn’t moe; it’s a gag. This is too much to even qualify as gap moe!!)” commented the goddess of beauty Freyja.

But the boy’s five senses were not sharp enough to pick up on those whispered voices on the other end of the beach. He was focused solely on what the small Waltraute was doing and saying.

“You just said you didn’t care if you lose, right!? Yay! I won the kitty dance!!”

"…Heh heh heh. Just do as you wish," muttered the small Waltraute with the expression of someone whose core had been broken.

With a full-faced smile, the boy said, "Then…then let's go play on the beach over there! There are a ton of weird animals. Mrs. Brynhildr was telling me about hermit crabs!!"

As he spoke, the boy grabbed Waltraute's hand.

九人姉妹のクールビューティー担当
次女
ゲルヒルデ

『手数の多さ』に優れたワルキュリエ。操り人形の糸を操作する時に使う木の棒を組み合わせた道具によって、一〇本の滅雷の槍を同時に操る。九人姉妹唯一の眼鏡っ娘。

作中で最も割を食った女性
三女
オルトリンデ

終盤まで「良いトコなし」なワルキュリエ。特殊スキルの説明もなかったので、脱いで注目を集めるしかなかった。

要領が良い末っ子キャラ
九女
ロスヴァイセ

『防御力』に優れたワルキュリエ。華奢な体躯には巨大過ぎる鎧をまとっている。その堅牢な装甲は、同系ワルキュリエが放つ滅雷の槍の連発すら耐える。若干あざとい。

ワルキュリエ九人姉妹のリーダー
長女
ブリュンヒルデ

伝説の戦死者ジークフリートを従える、指揮系統に優れたワルキュリエ。その能力はほぼ無敵の力を誇るジークフリートレベルの魂を数十万と同時に操るほど高い。若干ヤンデレ。

“Eh heh heh. Today I get to be the big brother.”

“Mh.”

Waltraute’s outer appearance may have changed, but she still had her full power as a Valkyrie. She did not in any way need to be protected by a soul from the human world. However…

“…”

The small Waltraute averted her gaze but still headed for the beach as the boy pulled on her hand.

The boy’s hand seemed somehow stronger and warmer than usual.

Part 6

They poked at hermit crabs, dug tunnels through mountains of sand, drew on the beach with driftwood branches, tasted seawater which turned their eyes to Xs, and returned a jellyfish to the ocean.

"(Hm, I can only see this as perfectly wholesome.)"

"(I would usually be making jokes about all of it, but it all looks perfectly normal with her appearance.)"

Those were the opinions of the eldest Valkyrie sister Brynhildr and the goddess of beauty Freyja, but the small Waltraute and the boy did not notice.

"Waltraute."

"Hm?"

The small Waltraute had been adding a seventh entrance to the tunnels through a mountain of sand and constructing three distinct layers within. She looked up with her hands still inside the sand.

"Um, I found this."

"What? Is it another piece of driftwood?"

The small Waltraute carefully pulled her hands out of the tunnel and finally turned around toward the boy.

And then she was left speechless.

The boy was dragging along a sword that measured over 150 centimeters.

It had to have been quite heavy, but the slender boy was somehow able to carry it around.

"What is that over-the-top weapon!?'

"I found it washed up on the beach."

"Wait. That sword looks somehow familiar…"

The small Waltraute narrowed her eyes as she stared at the large sword.

And then she remembered.

"Nothung…? That is the sword the human Siegfried used in his fight against the dragon!!"

“Nyah? Who is Siegfried?”

“The human Siegfried was the former husband of my eldest sister Brynhildr. Technically, Brynhildr is still completely devoted to him. A lot happened.”

“Oh. Then I should give this to her so she can give it to him.”

“Wait, wait, wait. Siegfried is gone…and the owner of that sword would be the most famous human in Midgard. Are you sure you wish to give away that honor?”

Nothung had been reforged after being broken, but it had originally belonged to Odin. It had been made in order to find the greatest soul in Midgard (and then kill that human to add them to the Einherjar war dead).

No matter under what circumstances he acquired it, that boy held the power to slice an evil dragon in two as long as he held that blade. However…

“Hm. But this belongs to Siegfried, so I can’t take it for myself,” declared the boy.

With a backwards glance to the small and dumbfounded Waltraute, the boy dragged Nothung along as he ran towards where Brynhildr lay face down sunbathing.

(Hm. I can respect that purity of heart.)

Waltraute was left with some admiration for the boy, but a problem showed itself soon after.

Brynhildr was a widow who was still truly in love with Siegfried (even if she had directly worked towards his death).

When the boy brought that memento of her husband, she was much more deeply moved than Waltraute had been.

Brynhildr rubbed the boys head.

“That is very unlike her. I suppose that is just how much lingering affection she has for the human Siegfried.”

Brynhildr embraced the boy.

“Wait, isn’t that going too far, Brynhildr? You are destroying the character you had built up.”

Brynhildr buried the boy’s head in her large breasts and began rolling around on the sand.

“Do not get carried away, you fool!! Are you trying to turn this swimsuit chapter into a Brynhidlr chapter!?”

Waltraute could no longer hold back, so she unsteadily approached the sexy sunbathing zone with a Spear of Destroying Light barely contained in one hand.

And that is how the swimsuit chapter passed.

Part 7

The end came suddenly.

While the small Waltraute had not grasped the truth of the matter, she had sensed some sort of premonition.

For example, there was the arrival of the dragon slaying sword Nothung.

(That boy said it had washed up onto the beach, but would something so convenient actually happen? Come to think of it, what even happened to that great sword after Sigmund and then Siegfried owned it?)

And one other thing stood out to her.

(Even if several unlikely possibilities coincided and Nothung did wash up on the beach, would that boy really be able to pick it up? While the sword was created so that souls of the human world could wield it, it was supposed to search for the greatest souls. …Not even I view that boy so highly as to think he is made of the same stuff as Siegfried. Why was that boy able to pick it up?)

The small Waltraute let out a groan as she watched the boy (and Brynhildr who had grown very fond of him), but she could not come up with an answer. And the fact that she could not gradually filled her with more and more unease.

Something was happening.

Meanwhile, a stingingly tense atmosphere filled the area around a spring in one corner of Asgard.

A decidedly negative emotion that was not murderous or hostile encroached on the area.

It could best be described as a general awe-filled fear for something unseen and not present.

It often filled human hearts when they thought about the gods, but it was exceedingly rare for it to spill from the hearts of the gods themselves.

The evil god Loki and the goddesses of fate known as the Norns were standing before that spring that displayed destiny.

Or perhaps it should be said they were confronting each other from across the spring.

Norn was not a term that referred to a specific individual. It was a general term for the three goddesses that made various predictions. In other words, it was closer to being a type of race like dwarf or elf.

But in this age, the term Norn referred to this group of three.

The goddess of the past Urðr, the goddess of the present Verðandi, and the goddess of the future Skuld.

As usual, the trio of Norns was completely expressionless.

“Even the way the story was introduced was odd,” said Loki. “A large difference exists between Asgard and Midgard’s cultures. That can be seen from the difference in the level of perfection of the runes they each use. …But bringing out the ideas of things like synthetic fibers and school swimsuits was the biggest problem.”

Verðandi and Skuld must not have been interested because they completely ignored Loki.

Perhaps because the issue related to her period of time, Urðr alone turned toward Loki.

“How is that a problem?”

“It has twisted the laws of this universe.” Loki smoothly continued speaking. “That boy removed one of the causes of Ragnarök. Surtr put down his sword and ceased construction on Naglfar. …But Ragnarök has more than one cause. If one is destroyed, the beginning of Ragnarök will focus on one of the others. Oh, I suppose this involves more than just the past, though.”

“Understood. As this involves multiple time periods, I will reply as the goddess of the present as well.”

“Same here as the goddess of the future.”

They seemed quite reluctant, but the other two goddesses also turned toward Loki. Urðr had also been in a bad mood about it from the beginning.

“As the goddess of the present, I must ask: can you sum up what you are ‘presently’ talking about?”

“And I have a question as the goddess of the future: what conclusion do you see this leading to ‘in the future’?”

Their lines and their attitudes did not match at all.

The Norns were in a very lazy and negative mood while Loki grinned with delight.

“Not even Odin can change the occurrence and outcome of Ragnarök.”

“And?”

“Fate is set in stone so not even the gods can alter it. But what about right now? In this moment, the cause of Ragnarök is switching over to another cause. Don’t you think fate can be shaken in this moment?”

“…”

“…”

“…”

Past, present, and future all fell silent.

None of the time periods could decide how to respond.

“And so strange things are happening. For example, all nine Valkyrie sisters have changed into swimsuits, they are using terms from an unfamiliar culture, and a completely normal human boy has picked up the dragon slaying sword Nothung.” Loki continued on his own. “Right now…no, I suppose saying that would be inconsiderate to Verðandi. Right here, fate and destiny are no longer in effect. Questions we already know the answer to can be led to a different answer. Right here, we have a threat that makes Ragnarök look like nothing. Unlike a war with a decided conclusion, no one can see how this will end. Not even the goddesses of fate. Am I right?”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“These nine worlds will soon be destroyed. The river of fate will collapse and flood everything. Not even I can imagine what will happen after that. Having everyone act on their own without being bound by fate sounds nice, but it may mean everyone will be eternally isolated and never able to make any connections with anyone else.”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“I had thought the three goddesses that can watch over all that exists would know some tricks into how the worlds work. But if you are at a stalemate here, it seems I was wrong. And something you three find impossible would be impossible for the other more minor Norns as well. Do you have any ideas as to who else might be able to do this?”

“Well,” it was the goddess of the past Urðr who replied. “This naturally occurring distortion in fate should have spread its effects thinly across all nine worlds. If you wish to cause an

intentional change, you would need to interfere with all nine worlds rather than focusing on a single point."

"…One would need quite the long reach to manage that."

"I can think of one possibility," said the goddess of the present Verðandi in regards to the presently developing situation. "The destiny that controls everything in the nine worlds cannot be interfered with or controlled even by we three sisters that watch over it all. I believe there is only one person who could do this."

"Who would be able to do something even Odin cannot?"

"The nine worlds," replied Verðandi. "The worlds themselves can grasp and even interfere with the entirety of the destiny spread thinly across them all."

"…I have never heard anyone say the worlds have a will of their own."

"In the present, no."

"Nor in the future."

"But in the past, they did."

Loki frowned when he heard the words of Urðr.

"…So that's it."

He sighed.

He had been led to quite possibly the worst answer.

"What are the nine worlds made from? I'm sure the goddess of the past can gladly answer that one."

"The great giant Ymir. Odin and the others killed the giant, broke apart his flesh and bones, and created the various worlds and living creatures out of them. That is how Odin was able to name himself the head god, name the Æsir the gods, and to name Surtr and his kind evil giants."

"So the distortion of fate has returned Ymir's will and he is planning to resurrect himself from the dead. Or perhaps the distortion in fate came about specifically because Ymir wished to be resurrected. But that distinction is unimportant," said the evil god Loki. "To resurrect, Ymir requires all the parts of his body." He finally reached his conclusion. "But his body has already been distributed to the nine worlds and the beings that live in them. If those parts are returned to the original giant they belonged to, the nine worlds and all life within them will be utterly annihilated."

Part 8

The great giant Ymir's resurrection had begun.

The sea grew dyed with the red of blood, the rocks on the shore became white teeth and bones, and the distant mountains turned to the color of flesh. It became clear what those objects they always tread on had originally been.

And the changes did not stop at the terrain.

The trees, the grass, the animals, the humans, the dragons, the fairies, and the giants were all affected.

Everything born within the nine worlds held this inescapable destiny. All objects and living beings created or born within the nine worlds were headed for their demise. It was the same for Muspelheim and Niflheim which had been made from the matter of the worlds after the Æsir in the process of destruction and revival.

"Wal…traute…" groaned the boy.

While still shrunk down, Waltraute had collapsed to the skin-colored beach. The same thing had happened to all the other sisters.

A few exceptions existed for this problem related to Ymir.

For example, the Æsir.

They had killed Ymir to create the nine worlds, so they had existed before Ymir died. They had been born somewhere unrelated to Ymir and had brought about their descendants from men and women that were unrelated to Ymir. As such, they would not be affected even if Ymir did resurrect.

However…

The Valkyries were existences whose forms had been changed for both gods and men. Humans had been involved in the process of their creation and those humans had been created from Ymir, so they were related to Ymir.

"I'm going to be having trouble soon, too," groaned the goddess of beauty Freyja.

She must have grasped the general situation from the changes occurring to herself and her surroundings.

She was a member of the Æsir, but she had originally been of the Vanir. In other words, she was a giant. She had the divinity of the Æsir so the damage was being reduced, but she could not

completely avoid taking damage since Ymir was involved in the process of her creation. At the current rate, she would become a part of Ymir's body just like every other life form.

"Honestly, we must have let our guard down because Ragnarök was temporarily avoided. It may have also been bad that the Norns did not react. Who would have thought Ymir would be coming back? But it is true that the instant that fate is switching rails is an opportunity for those who have been cornered by fate."

"What happened to Waltraute?"

The one suffering the most was likely that human boy.

He was directly receiving the effects of being created from Ymir and he had no divinity to defend against it with.

The damage was great enough that even an indirect blow was enough to knock out the average Valkyrie. The boy was receiving that damage directly, yet these were the first words from his mouth.

"What happened to Waltraute and the others?"

"Explaining the reasons behind this destruction would just bore you, boy. At any rate, there is nothing you can do for us even if you knew the reasons…"

If the pure Æsir that had no relation to Ymir gathered and worked to solve the problem, they might be able to manage. But it would be difficult even for them. Even if the Æsir were safe, their heavenly world of Asgard and the world tree Yggdrasil that supported it were beginning to collapse. When it was unclear if they could even protect the ground they stood on, they would not have time to worry about the other worlds.

"Boy, if you have any reverence for me as a goddess, then bury me after I collapse. As the goddess of beauty, I cannot allow anyone to see my body turning into something else. Ha ha. I know it isn't right for a god to ask this of a human, but please. Give me a proper burial."

"…"

The flesh and blood pulsated with life.

Something several dozen meters tall welled up from the ground that had changed form.

It was the great giant Ymir.

But this was not a perfect body. The body was dyed a dark red. It was covered in fresh blood and it did not appear to be covered by skin. It was just the core of his body. Once everything had been gathered from the nine worlds, his giant form that could pierce the heavens would be complete.

But thinking about it differently…

This was the perfect opportunity.

"…No, boy," said Freyja as she kneeled down on the beach. "Since Waltraute can't speak, I will stop you for her. You cannot do this. Even if it is incomplete, that is not something a soul born in the human world can handle."

"No," replied the boy decisively

He picked up the large sword that had fallen to the beach.

It was the sword he had given to Brynhildr.

It was the weapon prepared by Odin and then remade by human hands.

Yes.

It was the dragon slaying sword Nothung that *was prepared by the leader of the pure Æsir and held the power of the pure gods!!*

"No matter what happens, I cannot let Waltraute die."

The boy tightened his grip on the sword's hilt.

At 150 cm, the sword was longer than the boy was tall and he held it up of his own free will.

"I…"

He made up his mind.

"I…!!"

He prepared himself to wield the single power in that place that could kill the great giant Ymir.

He prepared himself to turn that power against a living being, regardless of what form that being took.

He prepared himself to protect the person he found most important even if it meant getting blood on his own hands.

"I will protect Waltraute no matter what it takes!!"

It was true that this was yet another form of justice. Many heroes had sought that justice, resolved themselves, and become members of the Einherjar war dead.

But this was not the path for that boy.

This was the boy who had avoided Ragnarök by proving in his conversation with Surtr that he held the determination to set down his weapon. His actions here would deny everything he had done back then.

Freyja tried to shake her head, but she no longer had the strength left.

The boy was going to take action.

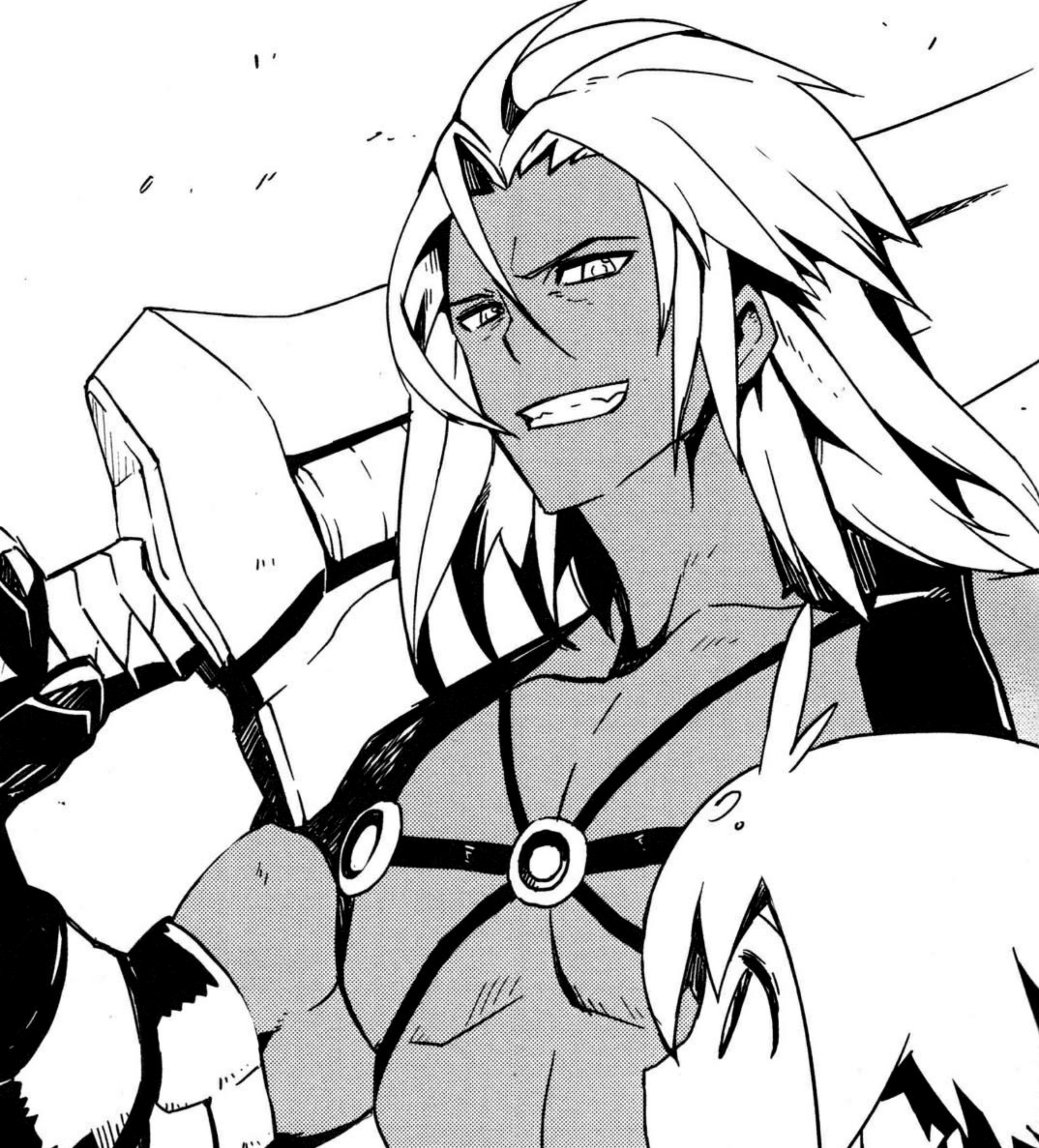
The distortion to fate was manipulating him into this new distorted fate of his own. He would choose the option he never would have chosen before – that he must never choose – and destroy everything he had built up.

The giant mass of dark red flesh that was Ymir seemed to be laughing. The dragon slaying sword Nothung was indeed a threat, but the fact that this human who should never have wielded it was wielding it proved how distorted fate had become. If things continued as is, Ymir would regain his original form.

But then…

Just before the boy took that first step off the path of his proper fate…

“Wait. That isn’t your role.”



A deep male voice reverberated throughout that landscape of distorted fate.

A large and thick arm reached alongside the boy and towards Nothung.

It picked up the large sword almost too easily.

It was as if the sword belonged in his grasp.

It was as if fate was being restored.

It was as if the sword was returning to its rightful owner.

The great mass of Ymir writhed as if to ask, “Why?”

“Do you want an explanation?” muttered the large man holding Nothung. He was dyed red with the blood of a dragon rather than with his own blood like Ymir was. “You’re resurrecting there, so is it really that odd for someone else who’s dead to resurrect? This only works here where fate has been distorted. Isn’t that right, you mass of materials for the worlds?”

Freyja muttered something in a scratchy voice.

It was the name of a hero.

It was the name of Nothung’s owner.

“…Siegfried?”

Part 9

At that time, fate was most definitely distorted.

The human Siegfried held the over 150 cm sword Nothung in one hand and spoke.

“So now we have a muscular macho man and a grotesque giant. Makes you wonder what happened to the love comedy.”

The giant red mass shook as if to ask, “Why?”

“You did nothing wrong. You were merely killed by Odin. You were merely turned into the materials for the worlds by that idiot who wanted to be known as the head god. Desiring to be resurrected is your right. That is why I didn’t want to leave this to that boy. The conclusion here and the guilt afterwards would be too much for him.”

The giant red mass shook as if to ask, “Why?”

“You and I were both killed thanks to a scheme of Odin’s. Odin didn’t want the military might of the heavenly world to be split by my monopolization of Brynhildr, so he tricked Brynhildr into hating me and indirectly stabbing me in the back. But I have no intention of having a pity party. Unfortunately for you, I don’t regret the past that much.”

The giant red mass shook as if to ask, “Why?”

“What good would hoping to be resurrected do? As I said, I have no regrets. At the very least, I don’t have enough of a reason to hope for resurrection as long as Brynhildr does not have her smile taken away. In the end, as long as she’s smiling, I don’t care what happens to my own life. …To be honest, I don’t find the fact that we were killed for Odin’s self interest to be the biggest tragedy. I say the biggest tragedy is that you never met someone you cared for this much. What do you say? You’re free to want to live, but let me ask: what would you do if you were alive?”

“Whyyy

It was made to demonstrate overwhelming sharpness only when turned toward the ruler of the current location.

Part 10

Once the great giant Ymir's core was sliced in two, the distortion of fate disappeared. The switchover from one cause of Ragnarök to another finished smoothly.

And this also affected Siegfried.

In the proper path of fate, his life had already been lost.

But that great man had no real attachment to the world of the living.

As if to announce that this was the proper way of things, the core of his being did not waver.

"Sorry, but I'll be taking this," said Siegfried to the boy while holding Nothung. "I want you to head down a path that does not involve wielding this. Doing so will help your Waltraute and my Brynhildr. Plus, it should enrage that one eyed bearded old man."

"?"

"You do not need to understand. The fact that you do not know the value of this sword and that you cannot compare the values of the two options shows that fate is back to normal. Just as I travelled down my path, you travel down your path. That will be the quickest path to building up your greatest strength," said Siegfried with a grin. "I used brute strength to face down gods in battle, but it seems the human will always be at a disadvantage no matter how hard he struggles. That's how I ended up dead. But your method might allow you to truly rival the leader of the Æsir."

"What do you mean?"

"Odin ranks things according to battles, so he sees no danger. He feels safe because he is the strongest. And that is why he cannot deal with anything when it comes to a love comedy. I guess you could call it the power of love. I'm not too fond of that sort of thing, but that bearded old man must hate it even more. Never fight your opponent under his own rules. If you want to protect something or someone, then force your opponent to fight under your rules." He then glanced over at Brynhildr who had yet to come to where she lay collapsed on the beach in a swimsuit. "But please do not forget that heading down your path will affect the fates of more than just Waltraute and yourself. It only has to be when you have some extra time. Maybe do it during the times when you have no plans with Waltraute. But call out to *her* on occasion. It's about time she finally starts speaking with a human that does not reside in her memories."

And the switchover of fate was complete.

The long, long countdown to the final battle of Ragnarök was set anew.

“Ah!? Despite everything that happened, why is my tiny body the only thing that has not reverted to normal!?”

“That’s because you shrunk due to eating too many apples of immortality. It had nothing to do with all that complicated stuff.”

The small Waltraute lamented and Freyja replied in annoyance while wearing her usual light clothing.

The other eight Valkyrie sisters had already left the beach.

The entire trip to go swimming had been unnatural, so they had quickly returned to Asgard once the switchover of fate had ended.

Siegfried was also gone.

He was merely an addition to Brynhildr’s power as one of the war dead.

The boy grabbed at the small Waltraute’s armor and said, “Hey, hey.”

“What?”

“If I don’t get home soon, my dad will be mad.”

“But you are supposed to stay overnight for a honeymoon!”

“Stop it, stop it,” warned Freyja. “Commenting on that could tear back open the sealed wound to fate. Really, we should avoid making any meta comments for about 2 weeks.”

“Mh.”

That left nothing else for her to say. And even the small Waltraute did not want the atmosphere to grow any more serious.

She called in her white horse and mounted it. She pulled the boy up and placed him in front of her.

“I have no choice then. Freyja, I will be taking this boy home.”

“Okay. …But why did it have to turn into a battle story at the very, very end? That was a hell of a day off.”

Freyja needed to return to Asgard, so she used Bifröst to break her existence down to particle form in an unnecessarily sparkly way.

The small Waltraute and the boy used the white horse to travel along the surface.

As they did, the boy said, “Waltraute.”

“What?”

“Would you be sad if I died?”

“Nn,” groaned the small Waltraute because she was unsure why he had asked the question.

It was likely related to what had happened during the distortion of fate.

The boy had chosen to kill in order to protect the one most important to him and he had also seen Siegfried seal off his own possibility of resurrection in order to protect who he found most important.

That experience must have made him think.

The idea of death could not be handled lightly even by a Valkyrie who watched over the deaths of many humans and took the souls of the war dead to Asgard.

Those who treated death extremely lightly like a certain bearded old man were the biggest fools of all.

“Let me tell you something,” she replied.

“What?”

“Risking and losing your life can indeed save someone else’s life. And there is a certain beauty to it. It is true that many heroes have intentionally sought such a fate.”

“I see.”

“But.”

“?”

“No matter how many people are moved by such courage and even if a life is saved, the life saved will always be filled with sorrow. That is one answer and one must never falter if heading down that path.”

Meanwhile, they arrived at the boy’s house.

The sun had almost set and the boy’s parents rushed out to meet him. They seemed more surprised by the giant white horse than the small Waltraute. The horse was from Asgard, so it had a strength that gave it a certain elegance.

They might have thought Waltraute was some kind of noble to be riding such a wonderful horse, but she was actually a god.

After being lowered to the ground by the small Waltraute, the boy smiled and spoke while completely ignorant of what his parents were thinking.

“Um, this is Waltraute. She’s my wife. We just went on our honeymoon.”

“Is that so?” replied his parents while smiling.

They seemed to think he was playing house with a neighborhood child. The only question on their minds was whether such a high class family lived nearby. They also sincerely hoped that the boy would not hurt her while they played.

“Bye, Waltraute. I’ll write you a letter.”

“Goodbye.”

After seeing the boy enter the house while waving, the small Waltraute began to return to Asgard.

But before she could, the boy’s father spoke.

“Please be a good friend to the boy.”

“I will.”

And then the effects of the apples of immortality wore off.

Waltraute’s 10 year old form was wrapped in bright light before transforming into a tall and glamorous beauty.

It was a slight annoyance, but the beautiful Waltraute ignored it and added, “As it was the outcome of a competition, I would never have wavered regardless. However, I, Waltraute the fourth Valkyrie sister, will vow once more. I may be inexperienced when it comes to mortality, but I will vow to remain by his side no matter what until the moment he dies.”

This time, Waltraute left the completely shocked parents behind (although it seemed she had not noticed the change in their emotions at all) and used Bifröst to break her existence down.

An unnatural aurora was drawn across the night sky as Waltraute returned home.

Part 11

“Hoo. That was some trip,” said Waltraute as she dismounted her white horse on the Bifröst runway in Asgard.

The third runway was still a gathering spot for goddesses and Freyja quickly noticed Waltraute.

“Oh? So you’re back?”

“Yes. A lot happened, but at least I was able to greet his parents properly. Our marriage was that boy’s reward for his victory. As the loser, I must ensure the marriage is handled properly.”

“You don’t have to translate every little thing into competition-speak. It’s kind of annoying. And more importantly…”

“What?”

“It looks like that boy’s papa fell for you when he saw your adult version. The mother has started violently attacking the man.”

“Ehh!? But I even announced I was the boy’s wife! What a pain!!”

Even if they had gotten married, even if they had overcome Ragnarök, and even if fate had been distorted a bit, Waltraute still had plenty of work ahead of her to ensure a happy marriage.

One big problem was currently presenting itself:

Due to various circumstances, her mother-in-law was very frightening!!

Afterword

To those familiar with all this: welcome back. To those new to all this: welcome.

This is Kamachi Kazuma.

Here is yet another new series. This story was put together to be serialized in a magazine. While Index has both science and magic and Heavy Object has just the science, Waltraute is completely on the fantasy side of things.

The theme is enjoyably learning about Norse mythology! At first glance, it looks like a ridiculous story trying to give actual meaning to the idea of marrying a Valkyrie after defeating her in a competition. However, I had to change quite a few things to make it work as a novel, so I hope you simply view it as an introduction to the mythology.

If you want see what is different from the actual Norse mythology and what was added in for the novel, you will have to do further research.

The construction of this novel could be a bit of a pain since it has the reader looking down on the Valkyrie who in turn is looking down at the human world. I suppose the target demographic could change a lot depending on whether you view Waltraute or the boy as the heroine(?).

Which way did you all see it at first?

Regarding Chapter 1:

As the title suggests, the motif of this chapter was Jack and the Beanstalk. Did you know it was based on Norse mythology? This is the only time the boy's name is mentioned. It's a bit of a ridiculous story, but stories of men coming up with challenges to win a goddess, Valkyrie, or princess's hand in marriage (without asking the girl what they think) are fairly common in Norse mythology.

(The target is usually Freyja and the male gods of the Æsir all try to stop the man.)

It is reminiscent of the impossible tasks of Princess Kaguya, but Norse mythology really does seem focused on war as befits the war god Odin being the ruler. For example, the male gods wanted to smash the head of a giant who pissed them off by proposing to Freyja and they actually did it.

There are also stories of getting to marry a Valkyrie if you caught one or getting a mysterious item or knowledge of runes if you were kind to a Valkyrie, so it seems Valkyries have always been treated as unattainable prizes rather than normal gods.

It was an extremely liberal interpretation of the innocent myths of a human getting to marry a captured Valkyrie that led to the competition-obsessed Valkyries seen here.

Regarding Chapter 2:

Chapter 1 was a journey up into the sky and this one heads down underground. This story involves the dwarves that show up in fantasy all the time.

"Now that we're married, I'll strip you naked!!" is the easy to understand theme of this chapter. But since this is the armor and clothing of a Valkyrie, stripping it off holds a certain sort of symbolism. This might be seen the most when Waltraute comments "If I lose these, I will have no idea who I even am!" when she bets the feather decorations on her head. One of the symbols of the Valkyrie is the swan, so losing those feathers is losing one of the major symbols of her character.

So as you can see, all this talk of stripping is not just simple fanservice.

The Super Rune Duel Cards were of course a gag, but if the human war dead go up to the heavenly world, it seems to me the technology and culture of the human world would flow up with them.

The dwarves' curse was just me thinking they would probably do something like that if they always either were forced to work at knifepoint or had the bill left unpaid.

When I found out Freyja, the most beautiful goddess in Norse mythology, was also known as the "sow", I knew I had to use it. But that's a secret.

Regarding the Chapter 3:

Since I was using Norse mythology, I wanted to use Ragnarök somewhere. And so I came up with this story.

As Waltraute mentioned in the chapter, this story is nothing more than a love comedy. Even if amazing things happen, I will do my very best to omit the actual battle scenes.

The trump card Waltraute used to defeat the other eight Valkyries may have looked like a one-shot gag in the previous chapter, but it is an item on the same level as Gungnir and Mjölnir. I felt it would only be proper for it to have that much destructive power.

It may seem the boy put up an unusually great effort in this chapter, but he is always risking his life to head to some other world. He might be even more courageous than Kamijou from Index or Quenser from Heavy Object. Plus, this boy is actually married. Similar to the motif of the first

chapter, this chapter's theme was using hard work to acquire that which you desire. I hope you felt that within the hard work the boy put in even if it was hidden beneath the gags and love comedy aspects.

Regarding A.E. 01:

The magazine serialization only went up to the third chapter, so this chapter is completely original to the novel.

It is clearly a side story, so I decided to give it an irregular numbering.

This was a swimsuit chapter!! Featuring a threat greater than Ragnarök!! …I wanted this one to have a very simple theme.

As for the characters, I put in Brynhildr and Siegfried since I had been holding back on using them before.

In a story of love between a Valkyrie and a human, those characters have to be in there somewhere.

I used Siegfried rather than Sigurd and Nothung rather than Gram in an intentional effort to mix together the names and settings of actual Norse mythology and the Wagner version, so be careful.

In this novel, the pair is a brokenhearted couple, but they may have been too heroic to be summed up with just that phrase. In the novel, Brynhildr is the type to be literally holding onto Siegfried's shadow while Siegfried is the type to smile as he talks about that love that has ended.

I cut most of the battle scenes as they do not fit into this kind of novel, but the conclusion of this chapter was quite severe. That was also because this was a side story. Everything is resolved through combat in Norse mythology, so that kind of conclusion is closer to the standard. However, I made it so Siegfried lost his life because he was unable to escape that cycle.

And because of the distortion of fate, I had the boy head full force in the wrong direction for once.

Basically, if the novel switched to a different set of rails, it could become that kind of story.

The boy lives on the love comedy side while Siegfried lives on the battle side.

The idea of not even the head god Odin being able to overturn fate is fairly well known. Even though it is predicted he will be devoured by Fenrir during Ragnarök, he cannot avoid it. Also, Odin respects both the Norns and the spirits of human sorceresses. I find the image of the head god descending to Niflheim in order to consult the ghosts of beautiful sorceresses to be quite

humorous, but that might show just how serious Odin takes fates. (And maybe that he sees those who deal with it as a threat?)

So when I needed a final stage for the novel chapter that overcame even Ragnarök, I thought fate would be a good candidate. What did you think?

I give my thanks to my illustrator Nagiryo-san, my editor Miki-san, and the readers.

I will end this here.

I hope it brought you momentary laughter and functioned as an entrance to Norse mythology.

Waltraute's swimsuit will have to wait until some other time.

-Kamachi Kazuma

Translator's Notes and References

1. Jump up ↑ This may refer to **Mímisbrunnr**, the magical water who holds wisdom. Odin sacrificed one eye to drink from this well
2. Jump up ↑ Jormungand, the Midgard Serpent, was one of three children fathered on the giantess Angroba by Loki, the Norse god of mischief and trickery.